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TWO ESSAYS:

I.

ON THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH:

II.

ON THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT, AND UNIVERSAL PARDON.

IN WHICH THE

VIEWS OF T. ERSKINE ARE PARTICULARLY EXAMINED.

BY RALPH WARDLAW, D.D.

"A desire to have Scripture on our side, is one thing; and a sincere desire to be on the side of Scripture, is another."
Whately.

NEW-YORK:

JONATHAN LEAVITT, 128 BROADWAY.

CROCKER & BREWSTER, BOSTON.

1830.

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PREFACE.

THE first of the two following Essays owes its publication, partly, to the request of christian friends in a neighbouring town, referred to in my preface to a volume of Sermons published in June last year. A similar application has more recently been received from the same quarter, with respect to a Discourse preached there on the subject of the second.—It would not be consistent with truth, were I, in either case, to say, that I had no previous thoughts of the press: but these solicitations, signed by names so numerous and respectable, couched in terms such as it would be equal affectation and incivility not to own as gratifying and urging considerations, which a regard to the interests of truth did not leave me at liberty to resist, settled the half-formed and fluctuating purpose

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into resolution.—Whether the solicitations on their part, and the resolution on mine, were warranted by any thing in the communication to be made sufficiently worthy of public attention, must now be left to the decision of those who may favour the volume with a perusal.—To the friends themselves by whom the requests were transmitted, whether prompted by a coincidence of sentiment with my own, or simply by a desire for the free investigation of truth, my grateful acknowledgments are, at any rate, due; and they are thus publicly and respectfully presented.

It is a serious thing, to charge a professed minister of Christ with preaching "another gospel" than his. When the Apostle Paul brings the charge, he adds, with all solemnity, and, lest any should think it a hasty utterance, deliberately repeats the denunciation, "Let him be accursed!" The least, certainly, that can be inferred from this is, that we should be very sure of our ground, before we venture to advance the charge. It is sufficiently well known, that, by some at least of the advocates of universal pardon and of the necessity of personal assurance to saving faith, bold and sweeping assertions have been openly made, that the gospel is not preached in this land; and, indeed, the same thing has, in substance, if not in the *ipsissima verba*, been avowed from the press: Mr. Erskine having, in his last publication, declared his conviction, that all who, in their preaching, connect pardon with the faith of the

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gospel, preach a system of pure selfishness, which he pronounces "man's religion, and not God's," and represents as subversive of the unconditional freeness of grace. In this condemnation are included, whatever may be the simplicity of their views otherwise, both of the ground of the sinner's acceptance with God, and of the faith, or belief of the truth, by which he becomes interested in the blessing, all who do *not* preach the very sentiments respecting pardon and assurance, which he has himself embraced, and which he conceives to constitute the essence of the Gospel. That there is ground for many of his strictures, on the nature and tendency of certain doctrines, and modes of stating doctrines, accords with my own observation. But his censures have appeared to me reprehensibly indiscriminate; views of the faith of the gospel being grouped together, and charged with the same consequences which are evidently and materially different. Surprise and regret at this indiscriminateness, together with a conviction, which I have long entertained, that on the subjects of the two Essays there is great danger, in controverting one extreme, of falling into its opposite, have been part of my inducement to publish. Whether I have myself been enabled to shun this tendency to extremes, the reader must judge.

Various publications have recently issued from the press, in opposition to the views which are controverted in these Essays. I know not

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hat any apology is due to their respective authors for my not having yet perused them; but I feel it needful to state the fact, in order to account for the absence of all allusion to them in the succeeding pages. The truth is, that, wishing to be quite untrammelled in pursuing the course of my own investigations and reasonings, I laid down the resolution, that I would read nothing of what was written by others, till I had finished what I had to say myself. As there could not fail to be, on the general subjects, a consierable coincidence of views and arguments, I was solicitous to leave no ground, in any mind, for even a suspicion of plagiarism. And, on the other hand, aware that, on some points, there was a likelihood of material difference, both in the representations of truth, and in the grounds adopted for the refutation of error—a difference hardly less important, perhaps, in those points, than the coincidence in others, I was equally solicitous to shun the appearance of writing, with personal allusion, against any individual on the same side with myself of the general controversy.

In the first advertisement of this little work, the general title given to it was "SIMPLE TRUTH." Various objections, however, were started against this title. By some it was conceived to be deficient in dignity. And yet, what is there that can vie in real dignity with unadorned truth? To what, more justly or forcibly than to truth, can the poet's line be applied:

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" Majestic in its own simplicity ?"

By others it was reprehended as *assuming* what it was the object of the work to *prove*—taking for granted, in the very title-page, that truth was on my side. This brought to my recollection a sentiment of the late Mr. Fuller, that " those writers who are not ashamed to beg the question in the title-page, are seldom the most liberal or impartial in the execution of the work." And, although, in giving to the very volume, in the preface to which this sentiment occurs, the title of, " The Gospel its own witness; or the holy nature and divine harmony of the Christian religion, contrasted with the immortality and absurdity of Deism," the excellent and able writer appears to have allowed his own remark to slip from his remembrance, yet is the remark itself by no means destitute of truth. It is always, however, conceived to contain even more of truth than really belongs to it, by persons who are predisposed against the particular views of which the writer avows himself the advocate. Such persons say, immediately, with an emotion half indignant, half disdainful—" Simple truth ! *that* remains to be proved;" and the very feeling thus excited gives an addition of strength to their prejudice, and fortifies them the more against conviction. Yet, surely, every one who publishes his sentiments on any subject to the world, must, if he be an honest man, believe what he publishes to

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be truth ; and a title-page ought, perhaps, to be considered, rather as expressing what the author believes his book to be, than as a demand upon all others to receive and acknowledge it as such. Yet, since a love of truth, and a desire for its prevalence, should make us anxious to throw no obstacle, of any kind, in the way of its acceptance, I have thought it better to dismiss my original title, and to leave the sentiments on the important subjects discussed, with nothing which even a single reader might construe into a presumptuous prejudication of their claims, to the free examination, and candid judgment of my fellow Christians.

I have endeavoured to make my appeal exclusively to the Holy Scriptures. In doing this, however, I have not, on all occasions, merely quoted them. I have reasoned upon them. But my reasonings, I trust it will be found, are all directed to one or other of two ends ; to the elucidation and establishment of their true meaning, or to the deduction from them of those conclusions to which they legitimately lead. No judicious reader will put these discussions aside, under the disparaging designation of *human reasonings;* those reasonings which justly merit this title, being such only as, instead of resting their decisions simply upon the sacred word, lead the mind away from it, and would found divine truth on the authority of human wisdom. I think I can say, with a clear conscience, that I have not written

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a sentence of the following Treatises, under the influence of any other principle, than either a sincere conviction of truth, or an earnest desire to find it. If any one shall convict me of error, it is my wish to have my mind kept open to the conviction; for nothing should be so dear to us as the truth, and we should welcome, as an angel of light, whosoever brings it; there being no one thing for which we ought to be more truly grateful, than the displacing from our minds of what is wrong, and the introduction of what is right in its room.

"If any one were required, without premeditation," says the eloquent author of the Natural History of enthusiasm, "to give a reply to the question, what is the most prominent circumstance in the present state of the Christian church —he would, if sufficiently informed on the subject, almost certainly answer—'The honour done to the Scriptures.'" Among other indications of this favourable characteristic of the present age, he subsequently mentions, "the prevalence of an improved method of exposition, attended by an increasing disposition to bow to the Bible, as the only arbiter in matters of religion;"—and in another place, in still stronger terms, he says—"Happily, in the age in which we live, if there be not, on all hands, a perfect simplicity of deference to the Bible, there is a nearer approach to it than has perhaps ever existed *defusedly* through the church since the days of the apostles; and happily,

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also, there are strong indications of an *increasing* deference to the only standard of truth and morals. This, by eminence, is the bright omen of the times." Every true friend of the Bible must hail this "omen of the times" with pleasure, and rejoice in anticipating its future results. The multitude of controversies at this moment afloat in the Christian community may seem, indeed, at first view, to afford no very inviting or promising exemplification of these results. But the introduction of a principle in itself good, may, for a season, by the operation of other concomitant causes, be productive of consequences such as cannot but be owned pernicious, while ultimately, by the settled sobriety and steadiness of its application, it may work out the most salutary effects. I cannot but cherish the assurance that, however lamentable the temporary evils resulting from controversial discussion, it will ultimately, by the very excitement of thought, and of inquiry, be the means of leading, in many minds, to clearer and more accurate conceptions on various points of divine truth. I would not be considered as having reference to any one disputed point in particular, but in general to the strange, and, in some parts of it, distressing *medley* of controversy at present existing, when I observe, that even the novelty of the principle may, to a certain extent, naturally account for such temporary evils. Minds that may have long been held in the fetters of human

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authority, or have reposed their easy faith on the "velvet cushions" of systems and confessions, are very apt, when roused and emancipated, to use their newly found liberty with too little discretion; to adopt views hastily; to spring rapidly from one thing to another; to be flighty and volatile; as if they had a kind of satisfaction in showing off their conscious freedom. Such minds, moreover, are in danger of getting self-sufficient, and "wise in their own conceits;" and of this attribute of mind it is the proverbial characteristic to be hasty of decision, and impatient of inquiry—to

> "Fling at your head conviction in the lump,
> And gain remote conclusions at a jump."

—But the principle of appealing, on all questions of religious truth, directly to the divine Standard, is, in its own nature, self-evidently good; and, let it but be universally adopted, and, under the influence of a growing knowledge, the result of more extensive and mature investigation, a knowledge that humbles as it advances; let it be soberly and steadily applied, in equal freedom from the volatile caprice of novelty and from the intimidating restraints of prejudice; it cannot then fail to be eminently advantageous, both in eliciting truth, and in promoting Christian union. The principles of *free trade* are admitted to be in themselves good, though, on their first introduction by any country, they can hardly fail to operate prejudicially;—they want only

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universality of adoption, and stable and honourable reciprocation, to evince their sound political wisdom and beneficial teudency. Let us, by all means, have *free trade* in the discussion of truth, —of truth of all kinds. And, in regard to Christianity, let all restrictions be taken off, whether of political penalty or of the self-imposed bondage of system, and let the simple and untrammelled appeal be universally made to the Holy Scriptures; and there will be a greater likelihood at least of agreement:—let all, instead of drawing from any human cistern, which, although professing to have been supplied from above, may yet contain some mixtures from below, come with their pitchers to the one reservoir, filled from "the sempiternal source of truth divine;" and they will find and carry off the same waters. If the contents of these Essays have not been drawn from this heavenly source, let them be rejected. We disclaim all authority. There is a style of dictatorial loftiness, and of almost inspired decision, which has been adopted by some of the abettors of the doctrines examined in the Essays, and by some too of the modern millenarian "school of the prophets," such as no man has had any title to assume, since the "vision and the prophecy were sealed up" in Patmos; and which is as offensive to good taste, as it is inconsistent with the humility of a disciple of Jesus. Away with it. It is not of any man now living,—it is of his Apostles and Prophets, who "being dead, yet speak," that

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the great Head of the Church has said—"HE THAT HEARETH YOU, HEARETH ME; AND HE THAT DESPISETH YOU, DESPISETH ME; AND HE THAT DESPISETH ME, DESPISETH HIM THAT SENT ME."

R. W.

Glasgow, March 15*th*, 1830.

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ESSAY I.

ON THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

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ESSAY I.

ON THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

THERE is a subject, which for some time past has, to a very considerable extent, been engaging the attention of Christians;—to which some ministers of the gospel have been giving so marked a prominence, that it has been associated with their names as if they had been its originators;—and about which, as might have been anticipated, a vast deal has been said, in the private circles of the professing world, in which there has too frequently been little discrimination of thought, and sometimes still less of intelligible definiteness of expression. The simple-hearted believer has listened and inquired, with timid solicitude and painful perplexity; the doctrinal speculatist has made it the arena for his pugnacious self-sufficiency; and the shallow talker has found in it free scope for his empty and pointless volubility.—The subject to which I allude has usually been designated by one word:—it has been called "the doctrine of ASSURANCE." And in the use of the term, there has been a great deal of ill-founded confidence on the one hand, and of as groundless diffidence on the other, and, with occasional exceptions, of desultory vagueness on both. Scriptural conceptions regarding it, however, are not a little important, that the two evils thus alluded to may be shunned,—the opposite evils of presumption and despondency; that neither may the true believer be needlessly disheartened, nor the mere professor be encouraged in delusive self-satis-

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faction, and vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. The despondency of the believer and the presumption of the professor are alike pernicious:—pernicious, I mean, not merely to the parties themselves, but to the observing world. The former gives an untrue and repulsive view of the gospel,—as if, although nominally good tidings, it did not make the believer of it happy, but left him still to "hang down his head like a bulrush, and spread sackcloth and ashes under him:"—while the latter presents a view not less false and calumnious, nor less stumbling andd etrimental to the souls of men,—filling the mouths of the ungodly with the sarcastic reflection, that, although professedly coming from the God of love and purity, it does not render those who receive it, and profess to be under its influence, either loving or pure—either humble, or peaceful, or holy. These are both very mischievous and deplorable effects,—against which it becomes our duty to oppose every possible means of prevention.

It might seem, from the very brevity of the designation, that this "doctrine of assurance" was confined to one simple point. But he who should think so would be widely mistaken. It either directly embraces, or touches collaterally, a number of interesting topics:—and especially, it stands in close connexion with the first principles,—the simplest and most essential elements, of the doctrine of Christ, as well as with all that the Bible teaches respecting the influence of these principles upon the heart and character.

I shall take for the basis of the following brief treatise,—in which it is my earnest desire that the Spirit of God may enable me to bring forward such views only as are in harmony with the statements of the written word, the only standard on all

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such subjects of truth and error,—the words of the Apostle John, in his first epistle—chap. v. 13,

"THESE THINGS HAVE I WRITTEN UNTO YOU THAT BELIEVE ON THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD, THAT YE MAY KNOW THAT YE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE, AND THAT YE MAY BELIEVE ON THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD."

These words contain all the topics to which it is my object to direct the reader's attention. They suggest the following series of propositions, which, in the discussion of the general subject, we shall, for the sake of clearness, make the heads of our discourse.

I. It is the design of God, by the gospel, that sinners may obtain "*eternal life*:"

II. This eternal life is, on the part of God, offered and bestowed "*in the name of his Son*:"

III. On the part of the sinner, it is obtained and enjoyed by "*believing*" in the name of his Son:—

IV. It is in the intention of God that they who believe in the name of his Son should "*know*" that they have eternal life:—

V. There are certain "*things written*" in his word, by which it is that they are to know this:—

VI. The same things, from which this knowledge is scripturally derived, serve to establish their faith, and to keep them cleaving to Christ.

PROPOSITION I.

IT IS THE DESIGN OF GOD, BY THE GOSPEL, THAT SINNERS MAY OBTAIN ETERNAL LIFE.

In briefly illustrating this proposition, our first inquiry must be—what is eternal life?—And the inquiry must first be answered *negatively*. It is

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not merely eternal being or existence. To this all mankind, by the sovereign and irreversible will of the Author of their being, are destined; and the destiny is independent of character; it comprehends the wicked as well as the righteous. There shall be existence—conscious and sensitive existence, in hell, as well as in heaven; where existence will not be desirable; where the cessation of being would be a boon of inestimable value, even although those on whom it was bestowed would not exist to be sensible of its preciousness.—LIFE is employed in scripture to express happy existence; and DEATH is correspondingly used to denote the opposite,—existence in misery; on which principle it is, that future punishment obtains the designation of the "second death."—"Eternal life," then, is existence in perfect, uninterrupted, and unending happiness.

It ought farther, however, to be observed, that this life is not entirely future. When we speak of eternal life, there are very many persons to whose minds the phrase conveys the idea of a state that is still to be entered upon, lying entirely beyond the limits of the present world, and continuing, to the close of the believer's abode here, the object of anticipation rather than of possession;—the hope here, the fruition in reserve. But, although the perfection of this life must be future, it cannot be too strongly urged upon the attention of all, that it is begun here;—that although heaven be the scene of its completion, earth is the place of its commencement;—that the birth at least must be in this world, though the maturity and permanence of the life be in the world to come;—and that, unless begun in time, it can never be obtained in eternity.

For the further elucidation of this important point, let it be observed, that, in contrast with death, there are three distinct although connected

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points of light in which eternal life may be contemplated,—as to *legal state*, as to *personal character*, and as to *future prospects*.

1. It may be regarded as to *legal state*.—As transgressors, we are under a sentence of death,—a sentence which the law of God has pronounced, unequivocally and universally. While that law declares, on the one hand, "the man that doeth these things shall live by them," it is not less explicit in its denouncements, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."—The supreme lawgiver said originally to man, when he instituted the test of his continued allegiance—"In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die:"—and the moment man sinned, the sentence took effect. The sinner "came into condemnation:"—and, all having sinned, all have since been under the sentence,—dead in law. When contemplated in contrast with death in this view of it, life consists in the annulling or reversing of this sentence. It is a state of pardon, justification, acceptance with God:—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life:"*—"He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him:"†—"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one [judgment came] upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [the free gift came]

* John v. 24.

† John iii. 36.

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upon all men unto justification of life.*—In such passages, life is used in a forensic or legal sense. It is associated with justification, or the removal of the sentence of condemnation to death. The passages express also, it is true, the way in which sinners come into this happy state of acceptance or life: but at present they are cited with exclusive reference to the transition itself,—the "passing from death unto life, so as not to come into condemnation."—With regard to the sense, or consciousness, which the sinner may possess of his having made this transition, and of his being in this state,—it belongs to a future part of our subject. This, then, is the first meaning of the term life,—a state of divine absolution from the sentence of death,—a state of legal pardon and acceptance with God.

2. Life may be regarded in reference to *personal character*,—or the moral state of the heart. As sinners, the degenerate members of an apostate race, the scriptures represent us as spiritually dead; dead to all those holy sensibilities of soul, which constituted the original life, or true happiness of man,—to the entire range of what may be termed spiritual sensation. The grand principle of the original divine life in the soul of man was supreme love to God in all the infinite excellencies of his nature. This love was life. The holy creature was fitted by this love for living on the love of God,—for relishing communion with the Eternal Mind,—and deriving emotions of the purest and most generous delight from every thought and word and act of homage to its all-worthy Creator. The essential principle of spiritual death lies in the opposite of this love:—"The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."† The life is gone, for the

* Rom. v. 17, 18.

† Rom. viii. 6, 7.

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love is gone; and with this principle of spiritual vitality, there has been, of course, a cessation of all the spiritual sensibilities; as physical sensation terminates when the animal life departs. There is this important difference, however, in the analogy between the animal and the spiritual life,—that in the spiritually dead soul, the soul from which the vital principle of love has taken its departure,—there ensues not a state of inactivity and unconsciousness, but the active influence of a virulently opposite principle,—that principle of enmity, which contains in it the whole amount of evil.

In harmony with this representation of our natural state, as a state of spiritual death, are all the representations given in scripture, under different figures, of the conversion of sinners. It is a regeneration, or new birth:—"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* It is a resurrection from the dead:—"And you [hath he quickened] who were dead in trespasses and sins:—God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."†—It is a creation,—the creation of a new principle of life:—"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:"‡—"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."§—There is thus in the conversion of a sinner, a quickening of the spiritually dead soul,—the bringing of it, like a child born into the world, into a new state of being; the implanting of a new vital principle of holy feeling and holy action; the creating of this principle, where it had no previous existence. Hence we read of the "*new man*;" by which is simply to be understood this new principle, as opposed to the former and still remaining princi-

* John iii. 3. † Eph. ii. 1, 3, 5. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 17. § Eph. ii. 10.

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ple, of moral corruption, called the *old man*. When this new principle is engendered by the life-giving energy of the Spirit of God, the sinner enters on a new course,—he "walks in newness of life." Now, this is eternal life begun. It commences with our regeneration, just as our temporal life commences with our birth into this world. There is this difference amongst others, indeed, between the two descriptions of life,—that the time of the one is not, by any means, in all cases, so determinate and fixed as that of the other. We cannot always tell our birth-day in the spiritual life, as we invariably may in the natural. The new birth may take place more suddenly in one instance, and more gradually in another; so gradually sometimes, and imperceptibly, in its first symptoms and early stages, as to render it difficult, or even impossible, to settle the exact date of its commencement. In such instances, it may bear a nearer analogy to the secret quickening in the womb itself, ere even the first faint flutterings of incipient life begin to be distinctly felt, than to the infant's birth into the world. But of one thing we are sure, that, whether sooner or later, more suddenly or more gradually,—take place it must, in regard to every sinner who becomes a child of God.* No one, in a moral or spiritual sense, is such by nature. The words of

* Philosophically speaking, it is instantaneous in every case; as there can be no *neutral* point or moment, between faith and unbelief—between submission and rebellion—between penitence and impenitence But, the evidence of the change, is, sometimes, very gradual in its developement.

The subject of the change continues for a time without hope, then with great trembling indulges some hope, which is strengthened as the evidences are unfolded. In the illustration, of "the secret quickening in the womb," it is plain, that there was a *moment*, when the life commenced; though time alone could display the certain evidences of life. Says that able and profound theologian, President Edwards, "If we look through all the examples we have of conversion in Scripture, the conversion of the Apostle Paul, and of the Corinthians

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Jesus on this subject are clear and decisive:—"Except a man be born again, he CANNOT see the kingdom of God:—Marvel not that I said unto you, Ye MUST be born again."

Let all, then, beware of regarding eternal life as if it were something entirely future,—something to be entered upon, for the first time in the world to come. It is entered upon here, by all the children of God. They "*have* everlasting life," not only in legal absolution from the sentence of death, but in begun spiritual enjoyment. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."* But still—

3. Eternal life is to be regarded in reference to *future prospects*.—The full and everlasting perfection of the life which is begun below, is to be enjoyed above. It is *eternal* life. Its commencement is on earth, its consummation in heaven. The elements are learned in this world of the full knowledge that is to be attained in the world to come. The germ of holy excellence begins here to unfold itself, and, amidst much that is calculated to retard its growth and to mar its productiveness, yields a small portion of its appropriate fruits; there, shall be the full-grown tree, in all its expansion of boughs, and beauty of foliage, and paradisaical profusion of fruitfulness.—We may consider the future life, indeed, as including both the soul and the body. The life which is begun in the soul here is a life which death cannot touch. It

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('Such were some of you, but ye are washed,' &c.) and all others that the Apostle writes to, how far they were from this gradual way of conversion." "What God wrought for the Apostle Paul and other primitive Christians, was intended as a pattern to all future ages, for their instruction and excitement. Ephesians ii. 7. 1 Tim. i. 16.

* Gal. ii. 20.

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triumphs over the grave. The stroke that separates the spirit from the corporeal frame, instead of destroying, perfects it; advancing it to a condition of unalloyed purity, and of as large an amount of unmingled felicity as a spirit in a state of separation is capable of receiving.—But from our conception of eternal life the body is by no means to be excluded. Such life comprehends in it the resurrection of the body in pure and heavenly refinement from all the grossness of its present materialism,—a "spiritual body,"—in power, and glory, and incorruption, made like to the body of the exalted Redeemer. Eternal life is the perfect, uninterrupted, everlasting happiness of the WHOLE MAN!

It is to this that God has purposed, by the gospel, to bring sinners of mankind. "Behold how gracious is our God!" The purpose is the dictate of love. It can be traced to no source but "delight in mercy." The formation of it ought to set the infinitude of the divine benevolence clear of all suspicion. It could never have entered the thoughts of a malevolent being. The heart to which it suggested itself must be full of kindness; the bestowment of good its pleasure; the infliction of evil its "strange work."—O how men do misapprehend the character of the blessed God, as it is revealed in the gospel! They many a time speak as if they had the impression that the Gospel is a restricting, limiting, abridging, fettering of that mercy which belongs in infinite fulness to the divine nature;—as if the confining of it to the channel in which it is there represented as flowing to sinners, were a bounding of its characteristic amplitude and freedom. What a mistake! It is in the discoveries of the gospel that the very highest and most stupendous manifestation is given of the "unsearchable riches" of divine benevolence—of the overflowing copiousness of the fountain of love in the heart of God. It is here that

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we read the most convincing and most impressive lesson of its absolute infinitude. The bounties of God's daily providence are all fruits and displays of exuberant goodness; and especially when there is taken into account the undeserving character of their recipients. But the gift of eternal life infinitely transcends them all:—and the purpose and the method of conferring it are the distinguishing discoveries of the gospel,—both alike indicative of a grace that knows no bounds—"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him MIGHT NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE."—Such is the purpose, the kind and merciful purpose, of the Gospel,—Yet still it is true, that there *is* a restriction. The nature of this restriction comes under our second proposition:—and we may then see that, so far from diminishing, it amplifies the evidence of the infinitude of divine love.

PROPOSITION II.

IT IS IN THE NAME, OR FOR THE SAKE, OF THE SON OF GOD, THAT ETERNAL LIFE IS OFFERED AND BESTOWED.

This proposition is very evidently implied in the text itself; and it is affirmed with greater explicitness in the preceding context. Thus, in verses 11, 12, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." It seems impossible that any terms in the compass of human language could con-

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vey, with more distinctness and energy, the connexion which our second proposition states. God gives eternal life;—this life is in, or by, his Son; and it is so in such a way, that "he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

There are three things clearly suggested by these words:—1. Eternal life is a gift—"God hath *given* to us eternal life:"—2. It is bestowed for Christ's sake—"This life is *in his Son*:"—3. It is bestowed *with* Christ: Christ is given, and eternal life accompanies the gift of Christ—"He that *hath* the Son *hath life*."

1. Eternal life is a gift.—This necessarily arises from the guilt of man. By sin, we have before seen, life has been forfeited. The sinner is guilty, and condemned to die. His condemnation is merited and just. He has lost all title to life;—and, having lost, he never can regain it. It ought not to require the reflection of a moment to satisfy any intelligent mind, that, in these circumstances, life must of necessity be a gift. The conclusion is natural, immediate, unavoidable. Where death is deserved, and life is bestowed, can any thing be plainer than that the latter cannot be a matter of desert:—that a creature, amenable to God, cannot both deserve to die and deserve to live;—deserve the wages of sin, and deserve the reward of obedience? And if life be not merited, there is no other conceivable alternative than its being a gift. If it cannot be gained by merit, it must be got by favour. If it is not, and in the nature of things cannot be, by works, it must be by grace:—and its being by grace means that it is perfectly gratuitous—"Without money and without price:"—"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through

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Jesus Christ our Lord:"*—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price:"† —"And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."‡—This is all simple, consistent, reasonable. I can conceive of nothing more irrational, than for a guilty creature to entertain the imagination for a moment, of ever obtaining life in any other way. He is condemned. He has no obedience to be a compensation for his disobedience; no merit to weigh down the scale of his delinquency; no good to be his protecting shield from the sentence of the law against evil. No axiom ought to be clearer,—and but for the blinding influence of self-partiality, it would be discerned by every mind and acknowledged by every lip,—than that the sinner who finds life must be a debtor for it to mercy,—to the free and sovereign clemency of his justly offended but benignant Judge.

2. It is in the name, or for the sake of God's Son. Its being a gift arises from the character and desert of the sinner;—its being "In God's Son" arises from the character and claims of the godhead.—There is more than a propriety, there is a moral necessity, that all the proceedings of Deity should be such as to secure the full glory of his name,—that is, of his entire character. Of no one of those perfections which constitute his infinite and immutable excellence, must the lustre be tarnished, the honour compromised, or the claims relinquished. All must be maintained in their full amount of requisition and of glory, and vindicated from every injurious imputation or surmise in the eyes of a witnessing universe. Among other

* Rom. vi. 23. † Isa. lv. 1. ‡ Rev. xxii. 17.

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parts of his administration, it was necessary for him to *bestow his gifts* in a a way that should thus glorify him. From this arose the necessity of a Mediator and an atonement. But for this, as far as we are capable of discerning, these might have been dispensed with; and mercy might have gone directly to its object. Had it not, in the wisdom of the infinitely wise, been required for securing and manifesting the divine glory in the forgiveness of sin, the atonement would have been, what its adversaries have ever calumniously represented it, a needless encumbrance.—But it is far otherwise. The sublimest of all ends is effectually answered by it. As the guilt of man rendered life necessarily a gift; the holiness and justice of God made it necessary that the gift should be bestowed in such a way as should leave no stain, or appearance of stain, or most distant ground of suspicion, against his pure and inflexible righteousness.—Such was the simple use of the atonement made by the incarnation and obedience unto death of the Son of God,—The Eternal Word made flesh. It is so stated, in terms the most explicit, by the Apostle Paul:—"Whom God hath set forth, a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God;—to declare at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."* This is plain. The declaring of God's righteousness, in such a way as that, in the forgiveness of sin, the exercise of that righteousness might be made apparent, as unsuspended and unmitigated,—that so "mercy and truth might meet together, and righteousness and peace embrace each other,"—that the honour of the law and government and character of Jehovah might

* Rom. iii. 25, 26.

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be untarnished, in bestowing life on those who were dead spiritually, and who deserved to die eternally; THIS is the gracious purpose of the atonement. And life cannot by any sinner be obtained otherwise,—for this plain and sufficient reason, that it is the only way in which God, according to his own declaration, can confer it honourably to himself. The appointment is not arbitrary and capricious. It is dictated by a necessary regard to the glory of his own great Name, the maintenance of which is inseparably associated with the happiness of the universe. Even if without assigning to us any reason at all, the Supreme Ruler had published it as his will that eternal life should be applied for in the name and through the merits of an appointed and revealed mediator, it would have been incumbent upon us humbly and thankfully to submit, and to come for pardon and life in the way which his grace and authority dictated. But he has not left us in ignorance. He has told us the reason of the atonement; and it is a reason which, in the spirit of it, we are quite capable of comprehending and appreciating;—so that our acquiescence is not a mere blind though grateful submission to authoritative dictation, but the intelligent and delighted bowing of the mind to an appointment of which the nature and the reasons are divinely explained.—In this epistle, as well as throughout the Scriptures, Christ is held forth in the character of a propitiation; and it is in this view of his official character and work, that connexion with him infers the possession of life:—"The LIFE was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that ETERNAL LIFE which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."* That "the Life," "the

* Chap. i. 2.

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Eternal Life," is here used as a designation of Christ, we learn, not only from the preceding verse, in which he is called "the Word of life," compared with the beginning of John's gospel, in which he appears as "the WORD," "in whom was life, and the life was the light of men;" but also from the close of the epistle, which is clearly an explanation of its commencement:—"And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: HE is the true God, and THE ETERNAL LIFE." But it is as a propitiation that he is the life:—"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world:"* "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might LIVE through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."† In this last passage, the connexion of life with propitiation is marked with all possible explicitness. This, then, is the ground on which life is bestowed;—"this life is *in his Son*." No sinner on earth can find it otherwise than in Him. To all without exception who receive it, it is the gift of God for his sake.

3. We noticed that the life is not only bestowed for Christ's sake—but WITH Christ.—The observation is founded on the peculiar phraseology of the twelfth verse:—"He that HATH the Son hath life; and he that HATH NOT the Son of God hath not life." And this is in fine harmony with the representation of him which we have just been noticing, as himself "the Life." There are expressions, too, in frequent use with the Apostle Paul, which con-

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* Chap. ii. 1, 2. † Chap. iv. 9, 10.

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vey the same idea. He speaks of "*receiving* Christ Jesus the Lord," for example, and of being "made *partakers* of Christ."—We thus receive Christ, and become partakers of him, when we believe the divine testimony concerning him. He then becomes ours, in the full virtue of his mediation. And it is *with* him, or in him, that we receive life. We cannot receive life but in receiving Christ. He is our life, because in receiving him we are delivered from condemnation, and "pass from death unto life" in the eye of law:—he is our life, because in receiving him we are regenerated, and the truth concerning him becomes the principle of the spiritual life in our souls:—and he is our life, because in receiving him, we obtain the divinely sanctioned hope of the life that is to come. When Christ is ours, life is ours. "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die:"*—"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."†—"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me:"‡—"which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."§

But on this part of the subject I cannot enlarge, without anticipating what more properly belongs to our next proposition.—Before going forward to it, let me urge for a few moments, with all earnestness, on the attention of every reader, the incalculable value of the blessing in question—"ETERNAL LIFE!"—I have called it a blessing:—but it is a vast assemblage of blessings. It includes in it "all

* John xi. 25, 26. † Col. iii. 4. ‡ Gal. ii. 20. § Col. i. 27.

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spiritual blessings in heavenly places;"—grace here, and glory hereafter; "fulness of joy, and pleasure for evermore." Other things there are which are accessories to happiness;—this is "the one thing needful." Other things perish in the using;—this, as its very designation imports, shall last as long as our being. O how worthless in the comparison will every thing pertaining to the present life be found and felt to be, when that most solemn of moments shall arrive,—the moment that shall close time and open eternity! If *then* we have not a well-founded and satisfactory hope of eternal life, how deplorable will be our condition!—When one world must be left, and another entered,—and when the one we leave has been our portion, and no provision has been made for the other!—when there is either no hope at all, or a hope that is self-flattering and delusive, founded in ignorance, in wilful and criminal ignorance, and only imbittering by disappointment the misery in which it terminates.—There is but one alternative,—eternal life and eternal death. O think, my readers, of an alternative so solemn and so irreversible;—and, ere it be for ever too late, —"while it is called to-day,"—while life and death are still set before you,—choose the life, that you may live. You are sinners. We are all sinners. This is the generic character of our race. The members of it may be practically sinners in an endless variety of degrees. But "all have sinned." Nor is the guilt of any individual, especially when regarded in its principle of ungodliness, of trivial amount.—And surely, with respect to that first and most essential principle of the Gospel—that eternal life is a gift,—the gift of free mercy to the undeserving,—I might put to you, in all its emphasis, the question of our Lord to the Jews on another subject —"Why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?" Must it not be so? Is not the congruity

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obvious between guilt and grace; and the incongruity not less so between sin and meritorious desert? Is it not right that the sinner should be humbled, and that the God whom he has offended should be glorified? How harmonious the divine statement—"The WAGES of sin is death; but the GIFT of GOD is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." And, whatever you may think of it, the declaration is plain and peremptory. If you are justified at all it must be "freely, by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." If you now have, or if you ever obtain, eternal life, it must be "IN HIS SON." There is but one way of it. Grace must reign. If you will not be debtors for it to grace, and to grace alone, (for the very nature of grace forbids a compromise,) yours it can never be. If you will not glorify God by accepting his free mercy, God must glorify himself by letting justice have its course. And then—who can intercede for you? who can save you? Do not, O do not, persist in rejecting the counsel of God against your own souls. Accept as a gift what you cannot, in the nature of things, without a dereliction on God's part of the principles of his moral government, ever obtain otherwise. Receive Christ; and in receiving Him, you receive eternal life. The spiritual principles of that life enter with him into the soul; the favour of God, with all its concomitant and promised blessings, becomes yours; and what is begun here shall be perfected hereafter. Hear, then, and obey the beseeching voice of Him who has said, and, while his word remains, continues to say—lifting up his hand to heaven, and, because he can swear by no greater, swearing by himself—"As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live: Turn ye, turn ye—for why will ye die!"

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PROPOSITION III.

IT IS BY FAITH,—OR BY "BELIEVING ON THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD,"—THAT ETERNAL LIFE IS OBTAINED.

SECTION I.

What is included in believing in or on the name of Christ?

This part of my subject I feel solicitous to place in as simple and scriptural a light as possible. The statements of the word of God respecting it have nothing in them but simplicity; it is to be lamented that the same thing cannot by any means be affirmed of human systems.

I begin with an observation suggested by the particular terms of the text. There are some writers who conceive that such phrases as "believing on" and "believing in," contain in them an evidence that saving faith is something more than simple belief. They have the idea of a difference between believing a person, and believing on or in a person; between believing a testimony, and believing on or in a testimony.—Now it may at once be granted, that between the two former phrases there *is* a difference; a difference very obvious, but one which does not at all affect our present inquiry. When we speak of believing a person, the person believed is the *testifier*:—when of believing on or in a person, the person is the *subject of the testimony*. We believe God, bearing testimony concerning his Son:—we believe on or in Christ, to whom the testimony relates; whose person and whose work are the subject of it.—The testifier and the subject of the testimony may be the same. God may bear testimony of himself. Jesus Christ may bear testi-

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mony of himself. Each may thus be believed as the testifier, and believed on as the subject of testimony. For exemplification of the correctness of this distinction, we need not go further than the preceding context. In verse 10 it is said: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he hath not believed (in or on, *εἰς*,) the record which God gave of his Son." Here we have believing *on* the Son of God, who is the subject of the testimony;—believing *God*, who is the bearer of the testimony; and believing *in* or *on* the testimony itself which is borne,—the latter phrase amounting to the same thing with giving credit to it, or, if you will, putting confidence in it, as the word of God: just as we are accustomed to say, when we hear any report which we do not see sufficient reason for believing,—I have no faith in it; meaning neither more nor less than—I don't at all believe it—or, I attach no credit to it. These phrases, then,—believing on the Son of God, believing God, believing in the record that God hath given of his Son, and (as in the text) believing on the name of the Son of God, are all phrases of equivalent import.—In chap. iv. 16. again, we have the object of faith stated in another form, without any preposition between it and the verb:—"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us;"—the love, namely, manifested in the mission and work of Christ mentioned in the preceding verse—"and we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." The case becomes still more simple, upon comparing with these expressions the phraseology of chap. iv. 15. chap. v. 1. and in the Gospel of John, chap. xx. 31. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God;"—"Whosoever believeth that Jesus

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is the Christ is born of God:"—"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through his name." In the first of these three passages, the high privilege of dwelling in God, and having God dwelling in us, that is—the enjoyment of the closest and most intimate fellowship of mutual love and union of spirit with God, which it is possible for a created soul to realize,—is attached to "confessing" (which is just the utterance of believing, and in such a connexion may be regarded as much the same) "that Jesus is the Son of God:"—in the second, being a child of God is associated in the same way with "believing that Jesus is the Christ:"—and in the third, both titles are combined in expressing the object of faith (each, when they occur separately, implying the other) and eternal life is connected with believing "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," precisely as it is in the text with believing "on the name of the Son of God." The two phrases, therefore, in the style of this writer, may be considered as of the same amount. Than the passage in the Gospel, indeed, it is impossible to conceive any thing more simple. The "signs" spoken of are evidences of the truth—"that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God:"—these signs are wrought for the express purpose, that, on the ground of the evidence afforded by them, this truth might be believed:—and with the believing of it eternal life is connected;—the life being obtained in believing; not, however, on account of the sinner's faith, but "through his name" in whom he believes.

What, then, is included, do you ask me, in "believing on the name of the Son of God?" I answer —the same as in believing "the record that God

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hath given concerning him."—It comprehends the belief—

1. Of the *divine dignity of his person*, as equal with the Father. In the record of his life by this same writer, he says—"I and my Father are one;"* and that in a passage where he speaks of himself as fulfilling the same purpose, in the exercise of the same sovereignty, the same love, and the same power, with the Father that sent him. In another place, he speaks of God as his Father in a way so peculiar, that the Jews conceived him to make himself equal with God; and he never contradicted them, or did away the impression.† And the Evangelist himself, speaking by inspiration, says of him —"In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.—And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth:"‡—language corresponding with that in the beginning of this epistle, where Jesus is introduced as "the Eternal Life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us."—I confine myself to the testimony of this writer, and to but a small portion even of that.

2. The belief of the *reality and design of his incarnation*.—"Hereby know we the Spirit of truth. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come;

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* John x. 30. † See John v. 17, 18. ‡ John i. 1—3, 14.

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and even now already is it in the world."* "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."† "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."‡ Believing on the name of the Son of God, then, is believing him to be the Christ, the anointed Saviour of the world, himself divine, and divinely appointed, assuming our nature, and "putting away sin be the sacrifice of himself."

3. The belief of the *completeness of his work*, and the *divine satisfaction in it*. The "record," as given summarily in the eleventh verse, implies this: God's "giving eternal life" and this life being "in his Son," clearly presupposes his being satisfied with what his Son, as Mediator, hath done. "I have glorified thee on the earth," says Jesus, in his intercessory prayer, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."§ And still nearer the termination of his course of deep and mysterious suffering, even when he bowed his head to give up the ghost, he said—"It is finished." To these declarations the Father "set to his seal" when he raised him from the dead; on which account it is, that his resurrection forms so leading an article in the statements of the gospel, and by consequence, objectively, in what the apostle calls "the belief of the truth:"‖—"The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach,—that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord-Jesus, and shalt believe in thy

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* 1 John iv. 2, 3. † Chap. iv. 9, 10. ‡ Chap. ii. 2.
§ Chap. xvii. 4. ‖ 2 Thess. ii. 13.

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heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved:"*—"Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him," (*i. e.* that his faith, namely Abraham's, was imputed to him for righteousness,) "but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification:"†—"If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."‡—The reason is, that Christ is represented§ as having "died for our sins:" but if he was not risen, his death had been no atonement, and the guilt of their sins remained unexpiated.

4. The belief of the *perfect gratuitiousness* of salvation, as bestowed in his name and on his account alone.—The "record" or testimony, as explained on the preceding proposition, evidently contains this:—"This is the record, that God hath *given* to us eternal life, and this life is *in his Son*." "For the *wages* of sin is death; but the *gift* of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."‖ Grace is essential to the gospel. It enters into its very essence. It is not believed at all, unless it be believed as a scheme of grace. It cannot exist without its grace, any more than the sun can exist without his light, or God himself without the essential properties of his nature. Take away gratuitous favour as the source of all blessing to sinners, and you take away the gospel. You leave nothing that can entitle it to the designation of "glad tidings of great joy."

Such, then, is the testimony. I do not consider myself as having at present to do with those lax

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* Rom. x. 8, 9. † Rom. iv. 23—25. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 17.
§ Verse 3 of the same chapter. ‖ Rom. vi. 23.

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theologians, of the Socinian and other kindred schools, who, in order to stretch the line of comprehension to a convenient length, are wont to insist, that nothing more was required to constitute a Christian of old, and that nothing more ought to be required now, than the belief that *Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ,—the promised Messiah,—the Saviour of the world*:—leaving an almost interminable latitude of charity, in regard to the meaning of the terms, and consequently of the propositions expressed by them. No matter, according to this latitudinarian system, whether he was God equal with the Father, or a mere man; no matter what was the nature of the work which, as the Christ, he was commissioned to execute,—whether to teach and exemplify virtue, or to make atonement for sin;—no matter whether his salvation be by works or by grace;—no matter whether there be a Holy Ghost, or whether his influences be necessary for the illumination and conversion of sinners:—no matter what your belief may be on such articles as these; if you are only ready to confess that Jesus is the Christ.—This is infantile. It is to make faith the belief of names, not of things,—of titles, not of truths,—of what Jesus should be called, not of what he is, or of what he hath done; the belief, in fact, of little that is worth believing, or that can have any salutary influence, when believed. I admit the belief to be sufficient, that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God:"—but I insist upon it, that in order to the belief of this being the belief of scripture doctrine, the terms and propositions must be understood in their scriptural sense. Otherwise, surely, the faith must be vain. It becomes the faith of no more than that certain words are in the Bible; not the faith of what these words were meant, by the God who dictated them, to convey.

It is with *faith in*, or (which is the same thing) the

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belief of the testimony, that eternal life is connected. I should deem it unnecessary to enter into further proof that these two phrases are equivalent in meaning, were it not for the unhappily mystical conceptions of faith which are so extensively prevalent. The word is in the lips of many, whose minds appear to have no definite or intelligible notion attached to it. They speak at times as if it were something more than belief, though they cannot tell exactly what;—or even as if it were something different from it,—according to some antecedent, and according to others, consequent.—Were I to announce the proposition that we are justified *by believing*,—there would in many minds be no feeling produced, but one of satisfied acquiescence in the statement; whereas, were I to put the proposition in the form—we are justified *by belief*,—I am greatly mistaken if some at least of the same minds would not be startled, as if something had met their ear which sounded rather new:—"Eh! what said you?—by *belief!* I am not used to that word:—wouldn't it be better to say by *faith?*"—To such a degree are we the creatures of words. The very circumstance of any one being thus startled,—of his jealousy for orthodoxy being thus awakened,—by such a departure from the mere sounds to which his ear has been habituated, is sufficient to show that he has not been thinking discriminately,—that he has not been analyzing his mental conceptions,—that his mind has been, too indolently, and to a degree of which he has not been aware, reposing on words rather than on things. If any two words can convey the same meaning, surely *belief* and *believing* do. Why, then, should the use of the former startle, and not that of the latter? Merely because the ear has become accustomed to the participle, but not to the noun. A different noun has been substituted for it,—namely,

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faith. And it is with this noun that the mysticism alluded to has been associated:—so that we may not infrequently hear persons say, when we have stated the testimony of the Gospel,—"That is all good—very good—*if we had but faith to believe:*"—as if faith and believing were different, and the one were necessary to the other:—whereas they are one and the same; and there would be as much sense in saying—If we could but believe to have faith,—as in saying, If we had but faith to believe. The expression, however, serves, along with not a few others, to show, that in such minds there is a conception of faith, as if it were a kind of abstract principle, or state of disposition, distinct from the simple mental act of believing. I know few impressions more unfortunate than this; because it tends to disconnect faith from the record or testimony, which is its object. And the truth is, that faith is incapable of any subsistence in the mind, except as regarding a testimony. It derives its very being from the existence of the thing believed. If the object be taken away, the faith cannot, in the nature of things, remain. The cessation of the one must be the cessation of the other. There can no more be faith without something believed, than there can be love without something loved. There may be the mental capacity of believing what appears true, as there is the mental capacity of loving what appears amiable:—but the actual exercise of faith and love there never can be without appropriate objects. We must have something to love; we must have something to believe:—and of faith, the entire value and efficacy arise from the nature of the thing believed.

When the Apostles went forth to preach the gospel, it was intended, not merely by themselves, but by Him who sent them, and whose Spirit directed their ministry, teaching them what to say and how

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to say it,—that they should be easily and clearly understood. In order to this, it was evidently necessary, that they should use words according to their ordinary and established meaning;—or, if in any instance they were to employ them in an unusual and appropriate sense, that they should make their hearers aware of the peculiarity. If they had acted otherwise, they must of necessity have misled those who heard them; nor could any have been to blame for the misunderstanding.—What then was their procedure? It was simply this. They delivered, in God's name, a testimony to men:—they presented evidence of its truth:—they called on men to believe it. In calling on men to believe it, they accompanied the call with no explanation of terms, as if they meant by believing any thing else than it was previously and universally understood to mean. They simply meant, that men should receive their testimony as true, and as coming from God. And we have every evidence of their having been so understood, and that too without difficulty and without perplexing uncertainty. It never seems to have occurred to any one's mind to say—You call upon us to believe your message as a message from God; *what do you mean by believing it?* If any desires were excited, or any questions put at all, they were to know what the message was, and what evidence could be produced of its truth and divine authority:—but as to asking what was meant by believing it, that was a species of inquiry, of which the thought never probably presented itself to any one mind among the myriads of either their Jewish or Gentile hearers.

To apply the same principle in another way:—the word *believe* occurs many times in the inspired records themselves, in reference to other subjects, various in kind and in importance. In these cases, no one is ever at a loss about its meaning. Why,

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then, are we to conceive any change in its simple and universally understood acceptation, when it comes to be applied to the gospel testimony? Why should there be any difficulty then? Why envelope in mysticism on this subject, a term so readily intelligible on every other? And that too, when no intimation is given by those who use it, of any extraordinary or hidden sense?

In the context itself of the passage on which this dissertation is founded, we have satisfactory evidence that the acceptation of the word is the same, when applied to a divine, as when applied to a human testimony. In the ninth verse, the Apostle says—"If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater: for this is the testimony of God, which he hath testified of his Son." It is true, as thus stated, that God is entitled to more undoubting credit than man. This is evidently what is meant by the testimony of God being "greater;"—it is more deserving of implicit confidence. But this does not imply any difference in the act of the mind in believing. The verse, on the contrary, assumes its being the same. It is in either case, whether God or man be the witness, "receiving the testimony,"—receiving it, from a conviction of the veracity of the testifier.

Still farther, then.—When a term is thus clear and simple,—incapable of being explained, or rendered more intelligible by the use of any others that are simpler than itself;—in all such cases, metaphorical and other figurative expressions ought of course to be explained from it, and not it from them. A great deal of confusion has arisen from not attending to this reasonable and self-evident principle. Thus, in John v. 40, 43, 44. and John i. 12. *coming*, *receiving*, and *believing*, are used as terms substantially synonymous:—In the former passage, Jesus says—"And ye will not *come to me*, that ye may

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have life:—I am come in my Father's name, and ye *receive me not*;—if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.—How can ye *believe*, who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"—In the latter, the words of the Evangelist are—"But to as many as *received him*, to them gave he power (or privilege) to become the sons of God,—even to them that *believed on his name*."—I have said that the phrases are *substantially* synonymous; for, were we in the humour for metaphysical hair-splitting, we might consider *coming* to Christ, and *receiving* Christ, as the effect of believing what is testified of him to be true, rather than believing itself.—Again:—When Christ speaks of himself under the metaphor of "living bread," and subjoins—"the bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world;"—then believing in him is expressed by eating this bread, or eating his flesh and drinking his blood.* Now nothing surely could be more preposterous, than any attempt to simplify the meaning of believing, and render it more intelligible, by an analysis of the metaphors of eating and drinking. If explanation be needed at all, it must be of the metaphorical by the simple, not of the simple by the metaphorical.

By many writers on this subject, trust or confidence is conceived to enter essentially into the nature of faith. I am not much disposed to quarrel with this; yet there is at times even here an occasional confusion of ideas.—The truth seems to be, that in one view faith or belief is the effect of confidence, and in another confidence is the effect of faith. For confidence may mean one or other of two things;—confidence in the veracity of the testifier, or confi-

* See John vi. 35, 50—58. with verses 68. 69.

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dence in him who is the subject of the testimony. When it means confidence in the veracity of the testifier, then the faith or belief of his testimony is its *effect*;—we believe the testimony, because we have confidence in the veracity of him who gives it. On the other hand, when it means confidence in him who is the subject of the testimony, then our faith of the testimony is its *cause*; we confide, for the attainment of our desire, in Him to whom the testimony bears witness, because we believe the testimony concerning him to be true. And in both cases, the confidence itself may be resolved into belief. For what is confidence in the veracity of the testifier, but a firm belief that he is faithful and true? And what is confidence in him who is the subject of the testimony, but a firm belief that he can and will accomplish our desires, or that they shall be accomplished by another for his sake? The committing to him of what concerns us is the effect and expression of this confidence.

These things appear sufficiently plain.—A traveller arrives at a town, where he is an entire stranger. He is taken ill. He knows nothing of the physicians of the place. He makes inquiry. He receives a very favourable testimony to the skill, the experience, the assiduity, and the kindliness of one of them. He has reason to confide in those by whom the testimony is given, as persons who have had means of knowing, and who would not deceive him. He believes it to be true; and, in consequence of his so believing it, he intrusts to the physician in question the care of his health. And thus it is with regard to every thing interesting to us, of which the charge must be devolved upon another. If inquiry must be made to ascertain personal or professional character, it is obvious that, in proportion to the confidence I have in the general veracity of my informant, will be the degree of credit or faith which

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I attach to his testimony in the particular case;—and that, in proportion to the degree of this credit, will be the confidence with which I commit the management of my business into the hands of the individual whose character he attests:—and in this case, I trust because I believe; my trust is the effect of my faith. And it is otherwise in the case before us? The subjects and ends to which it relates are, it is true, infinitely superior; but the process of mind is the same. God gives us, in his word, a testimony concerning his Son, as a divine and therefore all-sufficient Saviour, able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come to him. If we are convinced that this testimony is indeed from God; then, knowing that "it is impossible for God to lie," we believe it with a corresponding firmness: and in proportion to the firmness with which we believe it to be true, or (which is the same thing, since there can never be a doubt of the divine veracity) with which we believe it to be from God, will be the degree of our trust in the Saviour, who is the subject of the testimony.

Faith, then, is believing. It may arise from different descriptions of evidence. We may believe on the evidence of sense; *directly*, with regard to facts; *indirectly*, with regard to doctrines. When Thomas had the opportunity given him of seeing Jesus after his resurrection, of putting his finger into the print of the nails, and thrusting his hand into his side, and, his incredulity being overcome, exclaimed, in delighted wonder and adoring love, "My Lord, and my God!"—he believed the fact of his Master's resurrection directly upon the testimony of his senses:—he saw him, he heard him, he handled him. And, although the claims and doctrines of Jesus could not thus, in regard to their truth or authority, be the direct objects of sense; yet in consequence of the connexion of the

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visible fact with these claims and doctrines, (a connexion arising from this fact having been previously appealed to as the test by which they should be tried and estimated,) Thomas had *indirectly*, the evidence of his senses for the truth and divinity of them, as well as for the reality of the fact. But faith, as we have at present to do with it, rests not on the evidence of sense. It is the belief of a testimony, arising from a conviction of the veracity of the testifier. And saving faith is the belief of the divine testimony concerning Christ, resting on a full conviction of the veracity of God:—for, on the one hand, he who receives the testimony "sets to his seal that God is true;"* and on the other, "he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he hath not believed the record that God hath given of his Son."†—Saving faith is the belief of this record, as coming from God. In other words, saving faith is the belief of saving truth.

These things, simple as they appear, will be still more manifest, when we have considered a little, as we shall now proceed to do, *how and why eternal life is connected with faith, or believing*.—There is frequently a vast deal of unnecessary and perplexing mysticism associated with this matter: whereas in the word of God it seems to be abundantly plain, and free of every thing that should be felt bewildering by the simplest mind. We shall assign to this point a separate section.

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* John iii. 33. † 1 John v. 10.

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SECTION II.

How and why eternal life is connected with faith or believing.

THERE exists, I apprehend, a very prevalent conception, as if the connexion of life or salvation with faith arose entirely from the sovereign and arbitrary appointment of God, that so it should be. But this conception has its origin in a confused and mystical notion of what faith is. It is, in the minds of such persons, a something, they cannot distinctly tell what, with which it has pleased God to connect salvation; and they often profess to be wishing for it and seeking after it, when their wishes and pursuit have no well understood or definite object. But when we regard faith as having respect to a testimony, and as incapable, from its very nature, of any existence otherwise,—as being the reception of that testimony,—the believing or crediting of it, as the truth of God;—every thing then is clear. The connexion of eternal life with believing arises not from any mere appointment or will that it should be so:—it arises, in a very great degree at least, from the nature of the thing.—The gospel is a testimony from God. In that form it comes to us; and it demands our credence. It reveals to us certain blessings, to be enjoyed on a certain ground. How, then, is it conceivable, that blessings thus revealed should be received and enjoyed otherwise than by the reception or belief of the testimony which reveals them? I do not of course speak of infants, or of any who are naturally incapable of understanding and believing that or any other testimony:—I speak of those to whom the gospel comes, and who—

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minds are capable of having it addressed to them, and of comprehending its meaning. It is from the case of such, that the general representations of the Bible are framed—it is of such they speak, when they declare (as they uniformly and explicitly do) eternal life to be *by faith*. Now, the divine testimony is contained in the 11th and 12th verses of this chapter:—"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."—How, then, in the nature of the thing, can the life which this testimony makes known as the gift of God through his Son, be received in any other way than by the reception of the testimony which makes it known? From the nature of the blessings contained in eternal life, and especially, as we shall immediately see, of some of them, it is a thing that cannot (if I may so express myself) be forced into a man's possession. It is such, that no one can be made a partaker of it against his will, as qualities and possessions may be that are merely extraneous and physical. It must be accepted on the part of the sinner,—received, as the gift of God, with a willing mind. In no other way is it, from its nature, capable of being possessed:—and in what way it can be received otherwise than by receiving the testimony that reveals it for acceptance, I am quite at a loss to imagine.—He that *hath the Son* hath life." Now, how can any one have the Son, unless by receiving the testimony in which the Son is made known as the Saviour of sinners? Receiving Christ, and receiving the gospel that reveals Christ, are one and the same thing.

But on this important part of my subject, I must be a little more particular. The reader may remember that, in discussing a former proposition, eternal life was considered in three distinct points of view—in regard to the sinner's *state in law*—in

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regard to *spiritual character*—and in regard to *future prospects*. Now faith is connected with the possession of it in all these views: and in all there is great simplicity.

1. With regard to deliverance from the law's sentence of death, or what is usually called justification, and in one instance, by the Apostle Paul, "justification of life."* We have formerly seen that the gospel testimony represents this as a matter *entirely of grace*,—the perfectly gratuitous "gift of God." With regard to the enjoyment of this blessing in the mind, or the *sense* of pardon, it is obvious that there is no possible way in which it can be possessed by the sinner, except the belief of the testimony in which grace is seen reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. But even with respect to the simple *state* of pardon and acceptance with God, apart from the sense or enjoyment of it by the pardoned sinner, there is one important reason why it should be *by faith*. This reason is stated by Paul, Rom. iv. 16. "Wherefore, it is of faith, that it might be by grace." Its being *by grace* is essential to the very nature of the gospel; and its being *by faith* is represented as securing this essential point. There is a perfect contrariety between grace and works, but there is a perfect, and simple, and beautiful harmony between grace and faith. Justification *is* by the latter, *that it may be* by the former. This is fully brought out in Paul's reasoning, Rom. iv. 1—8. "What shall we then say that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him

* Rom. v. 18.

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that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."*—It is impossible that words should more distinctly express the difference between two things:—and it is obvious, that the simpler the conception is which we have of faith or believing, the more fully and clearly will the meaning and the justness appear of the Apostle's proposition in verse 14.—"It is of faith that it might be by grace." Our believing the divine testimony is the simple medium, appointed by God of our interest in Him whom that testimony makes known as "the Lord our Righteousness." It is not on account of our believing that we are justified. Our faith is in no respect the ground or meritorious cause of the blessing. Although a *sine qua non* to the possession of pardon, it is not the *condition* of it. The condition or ground of our acceptance is solely the finished work of that Saviour in whom we believe, and who, to every one that believeth, is "the end of the law for righteousness." Whenever a sinner, with a right understanding of it, believes, as true and divine, the record that "God gives to the guilty eternal life, and that this life is in his Son,"—he is justified; his belief of this record implying that he humbly accepts his pardon as "the

* The passage is quoted here for the sake of the general principle of the reasoning; and therefore I abstain from any minute criticism on particular parts of the phraseology; because, where this is not necessary for illustration of the point in hand, it only serves to confuse the reader's mind.

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gift of God through Jesus Christ;" that he is sensible of his own entire unworthiness, and of his owing this and every other spiritual blessing solely to grace. His faith is then "counted unto him for righteousness." It is reckoned to him *unto* righteousness, or justification. It does not become his righteousness. It is true that it brings the sinner into a *right state*,—a state of dependence upon God, and of holy love towards him; but this right state of heart is not perfect, but still accompanied with much sin and with universal deficiency;—it can neither cancel past transgression, nor in itself be acceptable to a holy God, apart from the mediation of Christ;—and it can never therefore be the righteousness on account of which the sinner finds grace in God's sight. It is his sanctification,—not his justification. The former arises from the same faith with the latter, but is quite distinct from it in its nature. When a sinner's believing is reckoned to him unto justification; this result of his faith arises not from any merit or virtue of its own, but solely from its bringing him into connexion with Christ, and to an interest in that perfect righteousness by which he hath "magnified the law and made it honourable." He is "made the righteousness of God in him;"* the efficacy of faith in the matter of justification arising entirely from the merit of its object. When we use the word *imputation;* when we speak of our sins being imputed to Christ, and of his righteousness being imputed to us, we do not mean that there is, or can be, any actual transference; as if Christ, by the imputation of our sins, became personally sinful; or we, by the imputation of his righteousness, become personally righteous. No. The sins are still ours, but he endures the

* 2 Cor. v. 21.

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penalty on account of them; the righteousness is still his, but we, on account of it, receive the blessing. And we receive the blessing by believing the testimony which reveals the justifying righteousness. We are justified by faith. We may dispute about the propriety of the words *impute* and *imputation;* but to deny what is thus intended to be expressed by them, is to subvert the gospel, and to sweep away the sinner's only foundation of hope.

2. We are to consider the connexion of faith with eternal life, as it respects *spiritual character.*— This connexion is, if possible, still more direct, and clear, and simple. "The word of the truth of the gospel" is invariably represented as from the first the means or instrument of that life; as the seed from which it springs, and as the principle by which it is subsequently maintained and promoted. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you:"*—"Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures."† And it is the same word of truth, which, under the same figure of *seed*, John represents as remaining in the heart of the renewed sinner, as a principle of restraint from sin and of progressive purification: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God:"‡—that is, not merely, according to the common interpretation of the words, is the child of God kept from sinning wilfully and habitually; but, in as far as the principles of the new nature prevail, he cannot sin at all. From

* 1 Pet. i. 23, 25. † James i. 18. ‡ 1 John iii. 9.

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the influence of the pure and purifying word of the living God there can arise nothing sinful. Sin is the product not of the holy principles of the new man, but of the remaining corruption of the old. When the latter shall be done away, and the former left to operate without any counteracting influence, and in the full amount of their holy energy, it will be heaven, the perfection of purity, and the perfection of joy.

Now it is, in the nature of things, inconceivable and impossible, that truth should operate effectually on the mind and heart, producing an entire inward change there,—from spiritual torpor and death, to spiritual sensibility, and life, and holy activity,—otherwise than as it is discerned and believed. It is the truth believed that instrumentally works the change; nor can it be imagined to work it otherwise than as believed. It is only by being understood and believed, that it is brought into contact with the mind and heart,—with the powers and passions, the appetites, desires, and affections of the soul; and so to operate upon them with its renewing and purifying energy. There is on this subject, in the divine philosophy of the Bible, a perfect simplicity. It says—"purifying their hearts *by faith*;" but it says also—"sanctify them *by thy truth*; thy word is truth." Faith, as we formerly saw, is "the belief of the truth;" and the truth must be present to the mind as the object of it, else it cannot be in exercise,—having no possible subsistence apart from an object. And moreover, from the nature of the truth which is the object of it necessarily derives all its virtue. It is *the truth* that sanctifies,—that exerts the rectifying influence upon the heart:—but it is of course the truth *believed*. This is the plain account of the matter in the scripture; an account unembarrassed with any perplexing mysticism:—"For this cause thank we

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God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it, not as the word of man, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, *which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*"* It is the word that "worketh;" but it worketh "in them that believe,"—that is, in those who "receive it, not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God."—This is all natural and simple. The word possesses a moral fitness for working a change on the human heart and character: and when by any sinner it is understood and believed, this fitness is made apparent in the actual production of the change.—If the new spiritual life of the soul is *by the truth* as its principle or germ, it is difficult to imagine how it can be so otherwise than *by faith;* for if it be by the truth, it must be by the truth understood and believed.

In further illustration of this, let us take the statement of Paul, Rom. v. 1, 2. "therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have had access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" and verse 11, "And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the reconciliation."† Now, how is it possible for us to enjoy

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* 1 Thess. ii. 13.

† την καταλλαγην. How our translators should have rendered the word *atonement* in this solitary instance, it is not easy to see. The connexion with the verse preceding so naturally leads to the ordinary sense of the term, that the change in such circumstances is particularly remarkable:—verses 10, 11: "For if when we were enemies, *we were reconciled* (κατηλλαγημεν) to God by the death of his Son, much more, *being reconciled* (καταλλαγεντες) we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now *received the reconciliation*" (την καταλλαγην ελαβομεν:)—i. e. by whom we have been thus reconciled to God.

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"peace with God," except in believing the record which reveals him as the "God of peace?" How can we "receive the reconciliation" otherwise than by believing "the word of reconciliation?" How can we "rejoice in hope," but as crediting the testimony which makes known the foundation of hope? The same questions might be asked with regard to all the peculiar principles and affections of the new man. From the nature of the thing, they must all of necessity have their origin in the belief of the truth. How can our souls be melted to godly sorrow for sin, but by the faith of that infinite love against which we have been all along offending? How can holy love take the place, in our hearts, of their native enmity, but by a believing view of the light and love of the divine character, as revealed in Christ? In short, penitence, and love, and hope, and joy, and all the assemblage of holy affections and desires, of which the existence and exercise in the heart constitute present salvation, can arise from nothing else but the truths that are fitted to produce them: and they cannot arise from these truths, but as they are understood and believed. Thus "eternal life," as it regards *spiritual character*, and is begun in the soul here, is necessarily by faith. It is so, not by any arbitrary appointment, but from the constitution of the human mind, and the natural relation of cause and effect.

3. You will readily perceive, that eternal life as it respects *future prospects* stands in the very same predicament. We have seen this already from Rom. v. 1, 2. And the same connexion of hope with believing appears in many other passages:— "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope

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through the power of the Holy Ghost:"* "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledgment of the truth which is according to godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie promised in Christ Jesus before the world began."†—Let me call the reader's attention particularly to Heb. xi. 1. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." So stands our English translation. But in Heb. iii. 14. and 2 Cor. ix. 4. the word here rendered *substance* is translated *confidence*, and it has occasionally the same sense in the lxx. and in profane authors.‡ And the word rendered *evidence*, while it primarily signifies a *demonstration* by argument, signifies also the effect of such demonstration on the mind, or *conviction;* and such is probably its meaning in 2 Tim. iii. 16.—That this is its true signification here, is manifest from the nature of the case; for faith is not evidence, but the effect of evidence—the conviction arising from it.§ The verse then may be more intelligibly rendered—"Now faith is the confidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."—This is very commonly considered as a *definition* of faith. I question the propriety of so denominating it. Let it be observed, that the apostle is not here presenting the gospel testimony, for the first time, to the ignorant, or, even for the twentieth time, to the unbelieving. When he did this, and called on sinners to believe it, he never thought (nor did any one else in those days of simplicity) of defining faith. It was too simple for definition. The apostle is here writing to those who

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* Rom. xv. 13. † Titus i. 2. ‡ See Schleusner, Dodridge, Whitby, &c. § See Schleusner, Wetstein, Dodridge, &c.

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had already known and embraced that testimony; and of the faith which they possessed, by which they were justified and had eternal life, he affirms —"It is the confidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Now by this he appears to mean one of two things:—either, in the first place, that "things hoped for" and "things not seen," being amongst the subjects of the divine testimony and promise, are of course among the objects of faith, inasmuch as faith regards that testimony and promise, and includes therefore the belief of things future and things unseen;—or rather perhaps, secondly, that by the faith of the divine testimony and promise "the confidence (or confident expectation) of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen" *are imparted* to the soul,—that from it they *immediately arise*. This is no unusual meaning of the verb *to be*. We are ourselves quite accustomed to it; as when we say of murder, or house-breaking, or highway robbery, that *it is death* by the law of our country,—or of any promising advantage to a man in business, this *will be* his fortune; and in multitudes of similar instances. It is accordingly common in scripture. "Take fast hold of instruction, let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life:"*—"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent:"†—"And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."‡ In these and other cases, the verb *to be* expresses, not the identity of the things spoken of, but a certain connexion between them, whether arising from positive institute or from their respective natures. Upon the same princi-

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* Prov. iv. 13. † John xvii. 13. ‡ 1 John v. 4

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ple, when the apostle says of the faith of the believing Hebrews—it *is* "the confidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen," he means that these are its immediate and native results, that they arise out of it, and are so allied to it as almost to form a part of itself:—the belief of God's testimony and promise in the gospel imparts, in a degree proportioned to the measure in which it exists, the firm and steadily assured expectation of all the glorious objects set before the eye of hope,—and the clear and realizing conviction of things which are beyond the evidence of sense, the invisible existence of the world of spirits. —And as it is by faith that "the hope of eternal life,"—that is, of the perfection of it above,—is introduced into the mind, it is by the same faith that it is maintained:—we "hold fast" together "the beginning of our confidence and the rejoicing of the hope:"—and it is by abiding in this faith unto the end, that the hope shall be realized in the fulness of joy.

Thus, "eternal life" is by faith, both as to legal state, spiritual character, and future prospects. It is so, not in consequence of any merely sovereign appointment, but in consequence of the very nature and circumstances of the case.—In regard to the first, as grace alone could suit the condition of a sinner, "it is of faith that it might be by grace:"—in regard to the second, it is of faith, because truth cannot operate upon the mind and heart without its being understood and believed:—and in regard to the third, a hope of future bliss, that is founded in a divine declaration and promise, necessarily presupposes the belief of the declaration and promise on which it rests, nor is there the slightest intimation in scripture of that future bliss being bestowed except in fulfilment of a previous believing hope. And faith, whether considered as justifying, or as

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sanctifying, or as imparting the hope of futurity, derives its appropriateness and its efficacy from the nature of the truth believed. From that it never should be separated in our conceptions of it; for from that it never can be separated in actual subsitence. There is this difference amongst others, frequently observable, between the statements of the divine word and those of human systems of doctrine professedly founded upon it,—that in the latter there is a great deal said about the *manner* of believing,—about what faith is, as a metaphysical act of the mind,—about *how* a sinner is to believe, not as it respects the spiritual and practical influence of his faith, but as it respects the process of the mind in believing;—whereas in the former there is nothing whatever of this kind: it dwells upon the *matter*, rather than the *manner*; it teaches us *what* we are to believe, rather than *how* we are to believe it. In human systems, we have distinctions without end, of faith into ever so many kinds, and modes, and actings, such as have often been found exceedingly perplexing to the mind of the simple inquirer. It cannot with truth be said of them, as it is said of the word of the Lord, that their entrance "giveth light unto the simple." The Scriptures, on the contrary, are occupied with the testimony itself. Of it they give a full and clear exhibition; but there are to be found in them no puzzling metaphysics about the mental process of believing it, and directions as to the manner in which that process is to be set about and effected. All is plain. The testimony is presented on the authority of God;—sinners are invited to consider and to believe it;—and the practical effects are detailed by which the faith of it must be followed and manifested.

I cannot go further under this proposition, without anticipating what belongs to the next; with

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which, however, the subjects discussed in this hold a very close and intimate connexion, as will then be apparent. In the mean time, let my reader beware of despising faith. Faith regards the truth believed; and to despise faith is in fact to despise that truth. The contempt is as contrary to reason as it is to Scripture. It is in the truth itself that the saving power resides, just as it is the medicine that possesses the healing virtue: but the truth can have no saving efficacy unless it be believed, any more than the medicine unless it be taken. It cannot justify; it cannot sanctify; it cannot give the hope of the life to come.* This is not mysticism. It is as rational as it is Scriptural. And, whether men will hear or forbear, the word of God is peremptory, in connecting salvation, in all its parts, with the belief of his testimony concerning his Son. Between faith and unbelief there is all the difference that subsists between a pardoned and an unpardoned, a renewed and an unrenewed, a hopeful and a hopeless state, in this world; and between heaven and hell, the state of bliss and the state of wo, in the world to come. For thus saith the Lord—"He that be-

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* It is only the adaptedness of the truth as *an instrument* that is here maintained. The nature of the discussion, does not lead to a definite and extended expression of sentiment, as to the *efficient and immediate operation and influence* of the Holy Ghost upon the mind and heart. Let the following scripture suffice. Prov. xvi. 1. "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." Prov. xxi. 1. "The heart of the King is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will." Acts xvi. 14. Lydia—"whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." "Observe, says that acute reasoner, President Edwards, that the question with some is, whether the Spirit of God does any thing at all in these days, since the scriptures have been completed. With those, that allow that he does any thing, the question cannot be, whether his influence be immediate; for, if he does any thing at all, his influence must be immediate. Nor can it be, whether his influence, with regard to what he intends to do, be efficacious."

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lieveth on the Son hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

PROPOSITION IV.

IT IS CONSISTENT WITH, AND FORMS A PART OF, THE DIVINE INTENTION, THAT BELIEVERS SHOULD KNOW THAT THEY HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.

This is evidently both the spirit and the letter of John's words:—"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, *that ye may know* that ye have eternal life." The Apostle wrote under the influence of inspiration; so that what he wrote was not merely his, but God's, having the sanction and authority of Heaven. And the same thing is true of the end or design which he says he had in view in writing it:—that design, too, was not only his own, but God's. He declares God's truth, for God's end. The observation might be illustrated from the first verse of chap. ii. "My little children, these things write we unto you, that ye sin not." That which he had, in the previous chapter, written, and the purpose for which he here states he had written it, were both alike of God.

It is quite clear, that the words on which our present discussion is founded do not mean merely its being the Apostle's object that they should know the *general truth* that eternal life was by the faith of the Son of God, and the *general consequence* thence resulting, with regard to themselves equally with others, that if they possessed this faith eternal

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life was theirs. It certainly means more,—namely, that, in believing, they themselves might have a personal knowledge of their possessing eternal life. The spirit of the words, laying all controversy aside, seems unquestionably to be—that it is not the purpose of "the God of all grace" that believing sinners should remain in a state of distressing uncertainty and doubt, with regard to their acceptance with Him, and their participation in the life which is by faith:—that it is not in harmony with his gracious design, that they should pass their lives here with nothing better than a mere *peradventure*, either respecting their spiritual state or their future prospects; that they should have nothing like certainty upon earth; that they should never be sure of their salvation, till they found themselves actually within the walls of the heavenly city. Even this, it is true, would be a great thing. Were they to spend all their days on earth in anxious and trembling apprehension, or at best in timid and dubious hope; if at last they did find admission to heaven:—it would, even in that case, be a display of rich mercy, and a ground of everlasting praise. But the gracious kindness of their God is more generously enlarged. His love abounds. He means, not merely that they should get to heaven at last, but that the life which is to be perfected there should also be enjoyed here; that it should be begun on earth, and that its commencement and progress here should give them a happy security, as to its perfection and permanence above;—that they should, while in this world, "*have* eternal life," and "*know*" that they have it. I cannot make any thing less than this of the Apostle's words. And, if such be their import, it must surely be very unreasonable to startle so much as many do at the bare utterance of the word *assurance*. It is a Bible word, and it must have a

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Bible meaning. That meaning it should be our sole and simple desire to ascertain. The word may be used unscripturally. It may be applied to cases, where there exists no true scriptural ground for the security which it expresses, but where, on the contrary, that which is called "the full assurance of faith" might with greater truth be denominated the full assurance of presumption. But the misapplication of the term can never disprove the reality of the thing; nor should we allow ourselves to be scared by any scriptural expression, merely because we may occasionally find it misappropriated and perverted.—The words before us are simple and explicit. Whatever may be the grounds on which the knowledge is to rest and to be enjoyed; whatever may be the "things written" (to be afterwards considered) by which the point in question is to be ascertained; nothing can be clearer than the declaration, in these words, of the divine intention that his people should "know that they have eternal life." Let none, therefore, set it aside as out of the question,—as a thing which it is vain and presumptuous to think of.—There is a very wide difference between possessing a calm and comfortable enjoyment of it in the soul, and being forward to affirm it and glory in it before others. A believer may be in the full possession of an inward, tranquil, and even joyful persuasion of his state before God, of his interest in the divine mercy, and of his safety for eternity; and yet not stand ready when the question—"Are you a child of God?" is put to him by a fellow-creature, to reply, with an unhesitating boldness, "I am." Let us recollect, that when any one says—"I am a child of God," he in effect says, "I possess the character of a child of God;" for no one assuredly can be a child of God without this distinctive character. And can it then never happen, that persons who

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really have the least of the character may be the most forward and fearless in making the affirmation? Never happen! It has happened in instances without number. It is what might reasonably be expected. Such persons have a low conception and a light impression of the standard of Christian character. They feel not, therefore, the burden of conscious failure lying with any painful pressure upon their hearts. The higher the estimate of that standard rises, the greater will the diffidence become with which the believer speaks of himself to others. There are, alas! multitudes of professing Christians, whose standard is very low. They have no scriptural conception of the spirituality of mind, the devotion of heart, the separation from the world, the holy conversation and godliness, the sublimity of uncompromising principle, the general sanctity of personal and social deportment, the walking with God, the waiting for Christ, the meetness for heaven,—that are incumbent on the child of God, and distinctive of him from the children of this world. In proportion as this low estimate prevails, will the professors who hold it, and to whose minds it has become habitual, be at ease with themselves, and think that all is well enough. It is when we look at the Bible standard, that we become sensible of our sad and multiplied deficiencies; when, instead of "comparing ourselves amongst ourselves, and measuring ourselves by ourselves," we simply regard the dictates of the divine word,—what is required of believers by its obligations, its precepts, its examples, its principles, its hopes. Was it not, amongst other things, the lofty standard of Christian attainment which Paul had set before his mind, that made him speak of himself in terms of such self-abasing lowliness—"Unto me, who am *less than the least of all saints?*" No doubt there contributed also to this humble estimate the remembrance of what he had been, an intimate ac-

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quaintance with his own heart, and a spirit of generously-judging charity towards others:—but with these there must be associated his having fixed a high point of attainment, towards which he was continually aiming, and still feeling himself far beneath it. On this principle, it may be observed, that a believer's opinion of himself is not to be taken as the proper criterion of his progress in the divine life. It would indeed, as a criterion, approach nearer to the truth, were it to be taken, not in the direct but in the inverse ratio; the opinion being depressed, in proportion as the character is elevated, —humble-mindedness growing with the corresponding growth of the other graces. There may be a steady and even a rapid advance in all that is spiritual and excellent, while there is, at the same time, such a rising conception of the purity and loftiness of the standard, as to make his distance from conformity to it appear greater to the believer's own mind than before; so that a child of God may be "growing in grace," while he is sinking in self-estimation,—his increasing lowliness being itself one of the indications of his advancing spirituality.

Still, however, this self-abasing sense of deficiency is by no means incompatible with a comfortable and cheering assurance of God's forgiving mercy and paternal love. While the Apostle humbly speaks of himself as "less than the least of all saints," he still, by the very expression, classes himself amongst them; and the whole of his writings, while they breathe the same spirit of self-diffidence, are at the same time distinguished by the spirit of happy confidence towards God. His self-diffidence was not despondency. His lowliness was not unbelieving self-exclusion from Christ. He "cleaved to his Lord with purpose of heart," and had "peace and joy in believing." With the same

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breath he exclaims—"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" and, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.—There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."*—How very differently may the believer, whom I have supposed to shrink from the bold affirmation, in answer to a fellow-creature's inquiry, "I am a child of God"—how very differently may he speak of himself, when a question, involving the very same amount as to state before God, is put to him in a different form. Suppose that, instead of asking, "Are you a child of God?" you were to put the inquiry—"Does your hope, as a sinner, rest exclusively on the free grace of God, through the righteousness and atonement of Jesus?"—there might be no hesitation to answer then. With a full heart, and an eye gleaming with the tear of grateful joy, would the humble believer say—"Yes, indeed: I am a poor, sinful, guilty, lost creature,—worthless, helpless, hopeless. But I believe the record that God has given of his Son. I know from that record the fulness and the freeness of his mercy to sinners through Jesus Christ. Here I place my hopes; and I have joy and peace in believing. Christ is my all. His finished work is my only confidence; and, I bless God, it is enough; I need no more. 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.' 'O! to grace how great a debtor!'"—Now this is the language of assurance. It expresses the first principle in the character of

* Rom. vii. 35; viii. 1, 2.

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every believer; the principle, namely, of self-renunciation, and of exclusive reliance on mercy through the merits of the Saviour. And there can be no doubt, that wherever this first principle exists, all the other graces will be found proportionally existing, that enter into the composition of the Christian character; and that the sinner who is, in deep and humble sincerity, under the predominant influence of this principle, *is* a child of God. But then, in what I have now supposed this child of God to say, *self* is not the immediate and prominent subject. In as far as it is the subject, it is in the way of confession of unworthiness and guilt. CHRIST is properly the subject. To Him the willing testimony is borne. Self is laid at his feet, in prostrate dependence; and the glory is given to him alone. It is in vain to say—Well, but does not what you suppose him to say amount in effect to the same thing as if he had said in so many words, "I am a child of God?" Be it so. I answer, that saying a thing in one form may indicate a very different state of mind indeed from saying the same thing under another form. When we read of the attitude and utterance of the publican, "standing afar off, not so much as lifting his eyes to heaven, but smiting on his breast and saying, God be merciful to me a sinner!" we have a deep impression of his contrite humble-mindedness. Should we have had the same impression, if the publican had been represented as coming to God, and saying, "O God, thou knowest what a duly contrite, broken-hearted, humble man I am?"—The same impression! No: we should have had the very opposite; we should have fancied we were listening to the Pharisee. And why are we not similarly affected by what he *does* say? Does he not actually express the sentiments of contrition, broken-heartedness, and humility? He does; but in a very different form of

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speech. And I adduce the case as an exemplification of the general principle, how differently and even oppositely, we may be affected by two different modes of uttering the same apparent feelings. And on this principle, may not a man humbly, sincerely, and fervently, express the sentiments and emotions of a member of God's spiritual family, who yet, from genuine, unaffected humility, might shrink from affirming, roundly and unhesitatingly, "I am a child of God?"

These observations, however, are in perfect harmony with what I have admitted to be the obvious import of John's words—namely, that it is the intention of God that believers should "know that they have eternal life." They are intended only to show that confidence towards God, and a comfortable assurance of personal salvation, may be enjoyed, whilst there may be a hesitancy, and a becoming hesitancy too, to express it in a particular way; and that to require a readiness to express it in that way as a test of the faith of the gospel, is unreasonable, unscriptural, inconsistent with a correct knowledge of the structure and operations of the human mind, and, withal, when tried by the unassuming delicacy of the Christian character, in exceedingly bad taste. That the God of grace intends his people to "know that they have eternal life," might be shown not only from these words, but from the many passages of scripture in which they are exhorted to constant confidence and joy:—"Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice:"*—"Rejoice evermore:"† such exhortations clearly implying a satisfactory knowledge or confidence of their state. But this leads me immediately to the subject of another Proposition.

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* Phil. iv. 4. † 1 Thess. v. 16.

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PROPOSITION V.

THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS WRITTEN, BY WHICH BELIEVERS ARE TO KNOW THAT THEY HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.

"*These things have I written* unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, *that ye may know* that ye have eternal life."

In order to the reader's having a clear view (if it be in my power to give it) of this important part of my subject, I shall first very briefly advert to certain mistakes respecting the way in which it is to be known by believers that they have eternal life; and shall then endeavour, having cleared the ground, to answer the question more directly, What saith the scripture?

SECTION I.

Mistakes respecting the way in which assurance of eternal life is to be known by believers.

1. I begin with observing in general, that the knowledge must arise from, or be founded in, *something written:* that is, it must, in some way or other, rest on the testimony of God in his word. This it is of the very first importance to bear in mind. The observation is intended to dispose, in one lot, of all those pretensions to personal assurance of state before God, which have their origin in alleged suggestions and impressions, whispers and voices, and all descriptions of direct divine intimation, to the mind of the individual, of his safety. I have no faith in any thing of the kind; but hold every pretension to it as enthusiasm and unscriptural delelu-

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sion. The sinner who builds his confidence upon such fancied intimations, rests on an imaginary and "airy nothing;" not on the word of God, but on the illusions of his own mind. It is not even on any thing in the particular *manner* in which divine truth may have been brought home to the mind, that the sinner's confidence must repose. The dealers in this kind of ware often tell us, how texts have been unaccountably *borne in* upon them, (such is their phrase,) even when, perhaps, they were thinking on something entirely different; and from this, or some other peculiarity in the circumstances of their own case, they derive much of their personal confidence. They cannot but regard the intimation as having come from God, because it has come in a way which appears to them so extraordinary. This will not do. Our confidence must arise from *that which is written*, and not from any specialty in our own case as to the way in which what is written has been suggested to us. This book is the word of God: and here are the things that are written—be they what they may—by which it is that we are to "know that we have eternal life."

2. Farther, then; it is not less clear, that in this book there is *nothing written* respecting the spiritual state, and eternal prospects, of *any sinner individually*. Surely this is a proposition which ought not to require either illustration or proof. The Bible contains no register of the names and designations of the elect, or the saved. It is not "the Lamb's Book of Life;" nor is that book at all within our reach—its contents being among the "secret things which belong unto the Lord our God," into which it is not ours to pry. Certainly, to every man of ordinary reflection, nothing ought to be more self-evident, than that no sinner can legitimately found his confidence of his having eternal life, or his

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knowledge of the safety of his state, on any thing of the nature of *direct divine testimony of his personal salvation.* No such testimony existing, all such confidence must be delusive. This has, however, been questioned, and that in no qualified or ambiguous terms. It has, for example, been said: —"Thus verily, before God, by whatever evidence I hold the resurrection of Jesus for a truth, by the same precise evidence I must hold it for a truth that I am justified, else I do verily hold God for a liar, for God himself hath equally asserted both the one and the other, in words of inseparable connexion."* Again; after quoting Acts xiii. 32, 38, and 38, 39. "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses;"—after, I say, quoting these words, the same writer affirms:—"It is obvious, from the terms in which both these declarations are delivered, that by whatever evidence it was possible for the persons to whom they were addressed to KNOW that God had raised up Jesus again, by the same precise evidence it became impossible for them NOT TO KNOW that God had forgiven their sins, unless they esteemed him an unfaithful witness."†

Now surely there is here a singular confusion of ideas. That God raised up Jesus from the dead,

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* Barclay's (John) Assurance of Faith Vindicated, p. 55.
† Ibid. p. 56.

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and that by so doing he attested the sufficiency and acceptance of the atonement made by his death, is a part of "what is written:"—it is also a part of the divine testimony, and, if you will, the sum of it —that "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart" (that is, shalt really and sincerely believe) "that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved;" or, in other terms, that "he that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life." These things "are written." They are in the inspired record. But is it, I would ask, written there, with regard to any individual on earth, that he or she *is a believer on the Son of God?* Clearly not. And yet, unless it be so written, whencesoever the knowledge of our personal salvation is to be derived—legitimately and scripturally derived—it cannot be from any direct divine testimony to the fact; for there is no such thing; no such testimony exists. We must deny its existence, till he who affirms it has shown us his name and surname, accompanied with such distinctive marks as exclusively appropriate them to himself, and a divine attestation of the owner of the name being a believer in Christ, and a partaker of eternal life. Nothing short of this can be regarded as a direct divine testimony to any man's salvation.

The sentiment I am opposing has been thrown, with the triumph of logical demonstration, into the form of a syllogism;—"He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life:"—I believe on the Son of God;—therefore, I have everlasting life. Alas, for the logic! Does not the very throwing of it into this form at once detect its fallaciousness? Does not the reader perceive, that the middle proposition of this syllogism—"I believe on the Son of God"—is no part of the divine testimony? it is only the sinner's testimony respecting himself. I am not proceeding on a denial of its truth. It may

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be perfectly true, and perfectly sincere. But still its truth must be ascertained by some other kind of evidence than that on which the reality of Christ's resurrection, or the truth of God's testimony, rests. One very simple question will in a moment make this evident. How does the sinner know that he himself believes the divine record? Know that I believe! he will say; how should I know it but by *consciousness?* and I may well be said to *know* it; for nothing can be more certain than that of which I am thus conscious. Be it so—although the proposition is in some points questionable—yet be it so. I ask him, then, whether it be by consciousness that he knows the fact of the resurrection of Jesus? whether the reality of that fact, or the truth of any thing whatever testified by God in his word, depends upon any consciousness of his? The testimony of God is true, and remains for ever true, independently of the faith and the consciousness of any sinner on earth; and the sinner's saying, "I believe," is, I repeat, his own testimony, not God's. The glaring absurdity of the sinner who says so regarding the certainty of his salvation, as ascertained by the same precise evidence as that for the resurrection of Jesus, will be still more apparent, when it is considered, that, if it be so, then, since all are bound to believe in the resurrection of Jesus, all must be equally bound to believe the certainty of that individual sinner's justification and acceptance with God. The faith of all that God testifies is equally obligatory: and if this sinner believes in the certainty of his own salvation as a part of the divine testimony, others must be bound to believe it too, and bound by the same obligation which binds them to the belief of God's word. And so every sinner's professed consciousness becomes a standard of truth, not to himself only, but to all mankind! The conclusion is inevitable, and its palpable absur-

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dity may satisfy every mind of the utter untenableness of the sentiment in question. Independently of the deep deceitfulness of the heart, and of the possible erroneousness of the sinner's conceptions of that truth which he says he believes, and of his consequent confidence of his salvation;—let his conceptions be supposed ever so correct, and his consciousness ever so sincere, and let the peace derived from it be ever so immediate and well-founded—still, the evidence of the two things we can never, on any account, allow to be identified. We cannot admit, in behalf of any man on earth, amidst the multiplied possibilities of mistake and self-deception which we know to exist, that the certainty of *his salvation* is the same, in its evidence and its degree, with the certainty of *Christ's resurrection*:—and it appears to me a most extraordinary and fearful inconsideration (to call it by no worse name) for any poor sinful creature, with a heart "deceitful above all things," to venture on the presumptuous affirmation, that if *he* is not a justified person, *the God of truth is a liar!* Should he at all qualify the affirmation, and say—"Certainly it is so, *if* I believe in Jesus;"—I grant it: but I remind him, that the very introduction of this *if* destroys the supposed identity of the evidence. The truth of Christ's resurrection, or of the divine testimony concerning him, depends on no such qualifying *if*. And I must say once more, that I can imagine no way in which any sinner can have the same precise evidence of the safety of his own state as he has of the truth of the divine testimony concerning Christ, except his finding and producing from the divine record a direct and explicit declaration respecting himself. Such a declaration no one ever *can* produce; and, therefore, the ground of the "knowledge that we have eternal life," must be something different from a direct divine intimation.

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3. On principles analogous to those which have now been stated, we must, in my judgment, set aside from the ground of this knowledge, what has, in certain systems of theology, been denominated *the appropriating act of faith*. If this phrase signified no more than that every sinner, in believing the gospel, must believe it *for himself*, it would, no doubt, signify what was true; but it would signify, at the same time, what had very little title surely to have a phrase invented to express it. It would signify a truism so silly, as not to be worth putting in words at all. The act of appropriation, as it is termed, signifies something quite different from this. It means, that saving faith is the belief that *Christ is mine*. I keep by this one phrase, because some others, (such, for example, as that *Christ died for me*,) although amounting to the same thing in the theological nomenclature of the systematic divines referred to, would lead us, were we to take time to explain them, into too wide a digression. The doctrine of appropriation, then, is that every sinner, when called to believe the gospel, is called to believe that *Christ is his*. Now, the ground on which we demur to this representation is the same as in the former case—that what the sinner is thus called to believe forms no part of *what is written;* inasmuch as it is nowhere written, in reference to any sinner individually, that *Christ is his*. The following observations will, I hope, set this in a clear light:—

First. I assume it as a first principle, that saving faith must be the belief of *something written*—something revealed in the divine word, and which will remain true, whether sinners believe it or not;—something that is true, antecedently to any call to the belief of it. But this is not the case with the proposition, in regard to any sinner individually, that *Christ is his:* and should any, who are invited

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to believe this, live and die in unbelief, it follows that they have been invited to believe what turns out a falsehood:—for there is unspeakable, I had almost said infinite, absurdity in the fancy, (which has, however, been gravely propounded amongst the enigmas of a mystical theology,) that a thing, which was not true before may be rendered true by a man's believing it.

Secondly. To believe that *Christ is mine* must be the same thing as believing that *I am justified.* But in scripture sinners are uniformly represented as justified *by faith.* According to this view, therefore, I am justified by believing that I am justified;—that is, by believing what must, of course, at the time of my believing it, be false. But,

Thirdly. Sinners are usually told, by those who hold the sentiment under consideration, that Christ is *theirs in offer—theirs in the Gospel grant.* Now this, I confess, has always appeared to me little better than a mere playing with words. That in the Gospel Testimony, Christ is, by the authority of God, held forth, with all the blessings of his salvation, for the free and immediate acceptance of every sinner to whom the testimony comes, be his condition and character what they may—is a glorious and blessed truth. But surely this does not render Christ theirs before they receive him—the blessings of salvation theirs before they accept them. The mere offer of a property does not render that property actually mine, if I do not choose to accept of it:—and if I am called upon to believe that it *is* mine, because it is mine *in offer*—what is meant? If it be meant that I should believe the fact of its being offered to me, and of its being at my option whether to receive it or not, and of its being mine if I choose to receive it—that I can understand. But if any thing more is meant, we

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are in the regions of mysticism:—we walk in darkness, and have no light.

The truth is, the persuasion that Christ is mine, is a persuasion consequent upon the belief of what is testified in the word—the belief of the "faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "He that hath the Son," says John, "hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." There is then a *having* the Son, and a *not having* the Son. Whence arises the distinction? Christ, in the testimony and offer of the Gospel, is set before all alike. Must not the cause of the distinction, then, be, that by some he is received, and by others he is not received? How, indeed, can Christ be ours, but as he is received by us? And how is he received? How, but by the belief of the testimony which reveals him? "He came unto his own, and his own received him not;—but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them who believed on his name."* Sinners, then, receive Christ, when they "believe in his name." It is then that he becomes theirs. They then "have the Son, and have life." "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you," says Moses to ancient Israel, "that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing;—wherefore, choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."† Their having the life and the blessing, then, depended upon their choosing them. They could not be theirs otherwise. If I am told that they were theirs *in offer*, I answer—true, and so were the death and the curse theirs *in threatening*. Were the one theirs any more than the other? They were both alike set before them, and which

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* John i. 11, 12. † Deut. xxx. 19.

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should be theirs depended upon their own choice: "Choose ye the life, that ye may live;" that is, that the life may be yours.

I am not going to enter at present on the doctrine of *universal pardon;* as it is my intention to make it the subject of separate discussion. But I cannot help noticing here the fallacious comparison (as it appears to me) used by Mr. Erskine in his introductory Essay to "Extracts of Letters to a Christian Friend, by a Lady," recently published:—"The *offer* of the Gospel," says he, "does not refer to the pardon, but to the *enjoyment of the pardon.* This is an important distinction. A friend leaves me a legacy of a thousand pounds. If I believe the information, I have the enjoyment of it; if I do not believe it, I have not the enjoyment of it; but the fact remains unaffected by my belief or unbelief. If I am told, 'You are offered a legacy, and you shall have it if you believe in it;' I should ask, 'What is it that I am to believe? Am I to make a fact by believing it? Or am I to get the legacy as a reward for believing what is not true? for it is not supposed to be mine until I believe it.'"*—Now, in this comparison, there appears, first of all, to be an overlooking of the difference in the nature of the things compared. Does the *enjoyment* of the legacy, and the *enjoyment* of the pardon, mean no more than the present pleasure arising from the belief that they are ours? In that case, there may be some parallelism between the two. But if by enjoyment be meant the actual possession of the objects, and the benefits resulting from them respectively,—then the parallelism ceases. A legacy cannot be enjoyed till it comes into a man's hands, and is in actual use; and no man of common honesty could

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* Introd. Essay, pp. xvi. and xvii.

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ever have the enjoyment of the legacy in this sense, without first believing it to be his. But a pardon is, in this respect, a very different thing. A pardon is the unconditional remission of the punishment due to my trespasses. There is nothing here to be received and used, in order to the actual enjoyment of it. It is enough that it exists. I have the enjoyment of it in the *non-endurance of the punishment*. I can fancy no other enjoyment of a pardon than this; and this is independent (as the pardon itself is supposed to be) of my believing in its existence. The legacy I must believe to be mine, and get into my hands, before I can enjoy it; inasmuch as I cannot enjoy it but in using it; and before I can use it, I must have it. But if I am actually pardoned,—if my sins are so cancelled that none of them can ever affect me in the way of punishment, my believing this is not necessary to my enjoying it, nor can it make the enjoyment of it any greater,—that enjoyment consisting in my actual deliverance from all the penal consequences of my sins. To make enjoyment signify no more than the mere present pleasure to the mind from the belief that either the legacy or the pardon is mine, is to reduce the result of believing to a very small fraction of the blessing. The true parallel to the case of a sinner and the offers of the gospel is this. A real friend, whom, however, I have falsely and injuriously regarded as my enemy, offers me a donation, or (for in principle it is the same thing) bequeaths me a legacy, of great value. But such is the pride of my heart, that I cannot brook the thought of being indebted to him. Under the influence of this unworthy principle, and the misapprehension of his character which gives rise to it, I scornfully refuse to accept the donation or the legacy. In these circumstances it could not be mine, surely, *without* my accepting of it. By refusing, I wilfully forfeit it.

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This seems to me the true state of the case, with regard to sinners who hear the gospel. Pardon, and life, and blessing, are set before them for their acceptance, as the gift of God, "without money and without price." But either they have their thoughts and desires occupied about other things which they like better—and they thoughtlessly disregard the offer :—or the pride of their spirits is such, that they cannot think of renouncing all idea of title, and receiving the benefits as a gratuitous boon—and they scornfully disdain the offer. Thus the pardon, the life, and the blessing, do not become theirs, because they will not have them. They make light of the proffered donation; they proudly reject the bequeathed legacy. In the comparison used by Mr. Erskine, the deed of bequest is supposed to be absolute, and to render the legacy bequeathed the property of the person in whose behalf it is made, independently of acceptance on his part, and if I may so express it, whether he will or not. But in the constitution of the gospel, there is nothing of this kind. There is no blessing made the possession of the sinner independently of his own will. There must be the concurrence of his will, in order to any one of the benefits of the gospel being his. No man can be pardoned or sanctified against his will. The latter is, in the very nature of the thing, impossible; and the former is impossible from the instituted provisions of the gospel, by which it is rendered necessary that the sinner fall in with the terms on which the pardon is offered, accepting it as the gift of grace through a Mediator. But on this topic I must not at present enter; even the remarks which have just been made are rather a digression.*

* If Mr. Erskine's comparison be inappropriate, no less so is another used by Dr. Malan, in a little tract entitled "The Assurance of Faith from God to his Elect, or the New Bartimeus,"—a tract which

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SECTION II.

What are the things, that are written, by which God intends this people to know that they have Eternal Life?

Setting aside, then, as unscriptural, the views of those who would rest their personal knowledge of their state either on direct intimations to their

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has been translated by some one who had no very correct acquaintance either with French or English, and which, on this account, leaves us occasionally in doubt whether we have the true sense of the author. But in what I now quote there can be no mistake; and it will sufficiently explain itself without taking in the connexion.—"*Pastor.*—Well, hear: suppose that you and I are in want of food, and that we have nothing to eat; we wander through the streets and highways, and nowhere find the smallest nourishment. We may imagine that there is enough of bread in this or that house for us; but this persuasion will not procure us that of which we stand in need. In this extremity, some one comes to us, and says, 'There is abundance of bread, and of all kinds of food, in the house of the Mayor.' Immediately you run, saying, 'I go to take my share.' I stop you with these words—'Your share! are they yours?' 'Yes,' you reply, 'for I believe they belong to me.' Do you think your reply would be sufficient and just?—*John.* I do not see that the knowledge of the existence of bread gives me any right to possess it.—*Pastor.* You have then been stopped by this remark, and you remain in your dilemma. But then the servant of the Mayor approaches, and says, 'My master proclaims that whosoever is hungry, [and will come, shall receive two loaves:' immediately I run towards the house, crying, 'I am going to get some food.' Some one says to me, 'Is the food yours?' I reply, 'Yes, it is mine; for the Proclamation is certain, "Whosoever is hungry shall have two loaves:" I am hungry, and I know the Mayor does not lie; then two of these loaves are mine, for he has said it to me.'—*John.* O what a light you throw upon the subject by this explanation! Ah! I understand it now. This is God, who said that Jesus is the Saviour of sinners who believe in him; which does not mean sinners who work wickedly,—that is as clear as noonday. God has said, that his Son is the Saviour of those who believe in him; and I ought also to believe, upon that declaration, that he is my Saviour." Pages 39—41. Now, who does not perceive that when John says, "I ought also to believe, on that declaration, that he is my Saviour," his belief of this is not *direct* but *inferential?* It is just this: Jesus Christ is the Saviour of those that believe in him; I believe in him; therefore he is my Saviour. There might never be in John's mind a formal syllogism of

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minds, or on direct testimony respecting themselves in the word, or on what is termed the appropriating nature of faith;—let us now try if we can discover how the case actually stands;—what are "the things that are written," by which God intends his people to "know that they have eternal life."—In order, then, to our having a full and distinct view of this interesting part of our subject;—amongst various ways in which it might be treated, I prefer, for the sake of unity of method, a recurrence to the threefold division of eternal life formerly introduced, and considering, with regard to each, the scriptural ground on which our knowledge of possession must rest; pointing out, at the same time, the relation of

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this kind. But unquestionably this is the mental process. There can be no other process by which the conclusion can be reached; there being no direct declaration, in the word of God, of John's being a believer in Christ, nor, consequently, of Christ's being *his* Saviour, in the sense in which he is the Saviour of those that believe; that is, in the actual bestowment of the blessings of his salvation.—Inasmuch as Christ's being *his* Saviour is admitted to depend upon his believing.—Still, then, there must be the *believing acceptance* of the testimony, *ere* Christ and salvation can properly be *ours*; and therefore, that he *is* ours can be no part of the testimony.—In the illustrative case supposed; the proclamation is, "Whosoever is hungry, *and will come*, shall receive two loaves."—Now, is it not evident, according to the very terms of the proclamation, that no one can have the loaves but upon *coming* for them? A man might please himself with the fancy of two loaves being *his*, because they were his in offer—his in the Mayor's proclamation;—but till he came for them, they were *not* his; the proclamation and offer limiting the bestowment to those who should so come. It would have fared but poorly with either John or his pastor, even though they might call the loaves theirs, if the said loaves had remained in the Mayor's house. Would this kind of possession have satisfied their craving appetites? Suppose either of them had entertained a dislike to the Mayor, and had been disposed by that dislike to say—"I cannot bring myself to go—I will sooner starve!" what good would the two loaves have done him? the truth is, they were not his till he had them; and he could not have them but by going for them: so must sinners believe in Christ, and come to Christ for the blessings of salvation, before they can be *theirs*.—If their aversion to the "bread of life," and to Him who has it to bestow, and who freely offers it, be such as to prevent their coming to him for it,—it can do them no good;—they must "perish for hunger."

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these grounds, in the evidence, to each other, and the impossibility of their disunion, or separate existence.

1. First, then, with regard to life, as it respects *state*, or *legal sentence;* that is, as it respects *justification*—the cancelling of the sentence of death, and our passing into the state of acceptance and life.

We have already seen what is the simple and exclusive *ground* of justification; and also, what is the equally simple *medium* of interest in that ground. What, then, are the "things that are written," by which we are, in *this* respect, to "know that we have eternal life?"

In answer to this inquiry, I must again insist on the simplicity of the gospel testimony; its simplicity, as it appears in the New Testament, divested of all the mysticism in which it has too often been needlessly and perniciously enveloped. The "faithful saying" is, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Jesus "finished the work, given him to do." Of this finished work, of righteousness and propitiation, God has testified his acceptance by raising him from the dead;—having practically declared by that event what he had verbally uttered from heaven at his baptism and transfiguration—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In the name of this Mediator, there is mercy with God for the chief of sinners; a free, and full, and everlasting remission of all trespasses, as well as every concomitant and subsequent blessing of life and immortality, being held forth for acceptance to all, without exception and without difference, who, crediting the testimony, and renouncing self-dependence, come to God for mercy on the Redeemer's account. The invitation is unrestricted, unqualified. It is not to one description

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of sinners more than another—not to sinners, for example, who have, in some way, previously prepared themselves for coming to Christ, or to God in Christ's name, and who fancy they have thus acquired a title, or warrant, or encouragement to come, which others have not, or which they themselves had not before;—it is to all;—to all, without difference and without exception;—to all, as they are—just as the message finds them. It is to men universally, as sustaining the generic character of sinners, that the message is addressed, and it is to their state as sinners that it is adapted. There needs no warrant for any to believe it but its truth, and no qualification for receiving the mercy revealed in it, but the sinfulness and guilt for whose removal it is designed. Why should we seek a warrant for believing what is true? The more difficult problem would be, to find a warrant for *not* believing it. The testimony of the gospel brings salvation near to every sinner in whose ears it is sounded. All are alike warranted, and warranted immediately, without the intervention or preparation of a moment, to receive it, to rely upon it, to rejoice in it.

It is very true that the terms of the testimony are general. What then? Being equally addressed to all, it is equally addressed to each. It contains no names, but neither does it except any. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have eternal life."* Thus it was, in the camp of Israel, at the time to which the Saviour, in these words,

* John iii. 14—16.

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alludes. The people, stung by the fiery serpents, were dying by hundreds. The serpent of brass was, by divine command, raised on the pole, in the centre of the camp, and visible, as it would appear, from every part of it; and the proclamation was issued throughout the host, that whosoever of the wounded Israelites looked to this brazen Serpent, he should live. From the moment that this proclamation reached the ear of any individual, whether he had just been stung, or whether he was just expiring, there was nothing between the wounded man and life but the turning of his eye to the instituted means of cure. There was no necessity that each individual of those who needed the remedy should be named personally in the proclamation, or have a distinct message sent to himself. The general proclamation, inasmuch as none were excepted, contained a perfectly sufficient warrant for each. And the same principles apply in all their force, when the Saviour, in the language of prophecy, with an allusion probably to the same striking emblem of himself, says—"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."* What sinner, then, amongst the children of men in all the ends of the earth, is not, by this invitation, warranted to "look and be saved," as much as if it were addressed to himself alone?

An illustration of the same truth may be drawn from the cities of refuge. The general appointment gave to every individual whose case was comprehended in the description, as valid a security, when he found himself within the protecting walls of any one of the divinely instituted asylums, as if the law had been made for himself, with his name in the body of the enactment. And thus it is with

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* Isa. xlv. 22.

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the gospel. It is a testimony from God, revealing a finished work of salvation, and assuring every one who believes it of immediate acceptance, forgiveness, and life. The instant, therefore, that any sinner is convinced of his guilt and hopelessness, and perceives the fulness of the proffered grace, and the unrestricted universality of the invitation and the welcome, his warrant to trust and rejoice in it is that instant as complete and legitimate as it ever can be. The sentiment held by some,—and by some, too, who "trust in themselves that they are *right*, and despise others,"—that all that the gospel holds out to the sinner, on his first believing it, is the bare *possibility* that he *may* be saved,—a possibility, which is to be worked out into assurance by a subsequent process of believing obedience,—is a sentiment as discouraging and heartless, as, happily, it is unscriptural. The gospel gives to every sinner to whom it comes, an immediate ground, on his believing it, of simple-hearted confidence towards God,—of peace, and hope, and joy. And here lies the great importance, on this part of my subject, of simple apprehension of the nature of saving faith. It is not at all in any reflection on the actings and exercises of his own mind in reference to what he hears, that the sinner finds his first experience of peace. He draws his peace directly from *the testimony itself*,—from the tidings which it contains. He discerns in that which is testified, concerning the finished work of Christ and the grace of God in him to the chief of sinners,—he discerns in this, under the spiritually enlightening influence of the Holy Ghost, what meets, at every point, the exigencies of his case. It is just what he needs. He believes it to be from God. He understands it to be for sinners, of whom he feels himself to be one. Nor does there, in these circumstances, exist any conceivable reason, why he should not immediately

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enjoy the peace, which it is not only divinely fitted, but divinely intended, to communicate. If it be designed to give peace at all, and if, in itself, it is adapted and sufficient to impart it, why should it not give it *now?* It must be able to give it now as well as at any subsequent time:—for if not, what will follow? Why, that the peace afterwards obtained must have some other source than the simple testimony of the Gospel,—something different, or something additional. If no more were meant by the doctrine of assurance, than that there is, in the simple testimony of the Gospel, as coming from God to sinners, enough to warrant immediate peace, and hope, and confidence, in the mind that understands and believes it;—instead of opposing, I should give it my decided support. Assuredly, the sinner's peace, when it is genuine, springs from the spiritual perception by his mind of the perfect suitableness of the provision made in the Gospel for his case. He thinks not at all about the act of his mind in believing. He is, of course, conscious that he believes; but even this consciousness is not at all an object of his attention. When a man hears a piece of good news, he never thinks it necessary, before he rejoices in it, to reflect on the act of his mind in believing it, or even on his consciousness that he does believe it. It is the tidings themselves that produce the joy. He has reason to credit their truth; he feels his interest in them; and they make him glad. The believing sinner is not personally named in the record; nor is there any need that he should be. He is included in the universal invitation to sinners, and the proclaimed indemnity to all who comply with it.

It has occurred to me, that there is, in this respect, a pretty close parallelism,—and the more I consider it the more it impresses me,—between the way in which a sinner knows that he is pardoned, and the

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way in which he knows that he is condemned. In both cases, it is by a general declaration, accompanied with personal consciousness. The general declaration of the LAW is—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the Book of the law to do them." No individual is named. But the sinner, deeply conscious that he has not "continued in all things written in the Book of the law to do them,"—conscious that, on the contrary, he has, in every thing "failed and come short of the glory of God,"—feels himself, by this consciousness, personally involved in the general sentence of condemnation.—In like manner—the general declaration of the GOSPEL is,—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life." No one is named. But the comprehensive "whosoever" includes every one to whom the testimony comes. He feels himself a sinner:—the message is a message of mercy to sinners, on the ground of the Saviour's finished work. It is to "the world"—to "the whole world;" declaring that "whosoever believeth hath everlasting life." He humbly believes the testimony, as from God:—and his simple consciousness of believing it places him amongst those to whom it promises "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."—On both sides of this parallel, there is of course understood to be a right apprehension of the law on the one hand, and of the gospel on the other. This must be assumed. If there be not a right understanding of the law, the sense of guilt will be proportionably defective and erroneous: and if there be not a right understanding of the gospel, the peace must be false and delusive.

I know few things of greater consequence than clearing the ground on this first particular,—simplifying the way of a sinner's coming to Christ and

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finding peace. Here, I apprehend, lies a great deal of what is frequently so perplexing and bewildering to the minds of inquirers, in human systems. The statements which some of them contain on this subject have kept many a sinner long back from the Saviour; besetting the way with briars and thorns, which intercept the open freeness of its access:—or converting the way itself into an intricate labyrinth, through which a passage must be groped with long, and tedious, and dreary difficulty:—or interdicting the sinner, even when he has come to Christ, from enjoying immediate peace and hope in resting on his merits and grace. There is nothing of this kind in the Bible. "Come unto me," is Christ's simple invitation:—"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," is his all-gracious and encouraging assurance:—and it is his design that sinners, simply believing in him, should, on the ground of this assurance, "know that they have eternal life."

These observations are in perfect harmony with the many instances recorded in the New Testament history, of sinners, immediately on their understanding and believing the apostolic testimony, being filled with joy, and peace, and hope. Thus it was, on the day of Pentecost, with those who were "pricked in their hearts" by the sudden and distressing sense of guilt awakened in them by the preaching of the apostles, when they received the testimony of free mercy through the blood of Him whom, with wicked hands, they had crucified and slain. The torturing wounds of conscious guilt were healed by the blood of the cross, and an humble, holy, elevated joy, was immediately diffused through their souls. They "*gladly* received the word;" and they "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers"—"and did eat their meat

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with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God."* Thus it was with the Ethiopian Eunuch, when, upon receiving the testimony of Philip, and being baptized into the faith of it, he "went on his way *rejoicing*."† Thus it was with the Philippian jailor, when his trembling spirit was set at rest by the apostle's answer to his eager inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" Whenever he understood the reply, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house"—he "*rejoiced*, believing in God with all his house."‡ Thus, too, it was with the believers at Thessalonica, when they "received the word in much affliction, *with joy* of the Holy Ghost."§ And if it was thus of old, in the beginning of the gospel, can any good reason be assigned why it should not be so now? The gospel is the same; the character, and condition, and exigencies of sinners are the same; the adaptation of the one to the other is the same;—why then should not the effects be the same? the same in kind, the same in immediateness?—I do not, by any means, deny that, in many cases, the sinner's mind does continue for a time under painful and distracting convictions and fears. But this is not owing to any thing in the gospel; nor is it consistent with its own proper nature and tendency. To trace these fears to their causes is not my present object. I only say that the gospel itself is good tidings; and that good tidings, from their very nature, must be fitted, when understood and believed, to inspire, not fear, but hope, not sorrow, but gladness. "The law worketh wrath." It convicts of sin, and agitates the soul with well-founded terrors. The gospel proclaims peace:—"I create the fruit of the

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* Acts ii. 37.; 41, 42. 46, 47.
† Acts viii. 35—39.
‡ Acts xvi. 30—34.
§ 1 Thess. i. 6.

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lips —Peace, peace, to him that is far off, and to him that is near"—to Gentile as well as to Jew:—and it must be owing to some remaining misapprehension of its nature, and of the gracious purpose of Him whose message it is, if immediate peace is not derived from it. That which is "written, so full of simplicity, is, of itself, quite sufficient to introduce immediate joy into every spiritually enlightened and believing mind.

Let it not be alleged, that when I speak of our "knowing that we have eternal life," as being founded in something written, this is to affirm all evidence of personal salvation to be *outward*, or *extraneous to the sinner's own mind*. This were a strange misapprehension. The truth is, there is none of the evidence outward; nor, in the nature of things, can it be. It must all, of necessity, be connected with *consciousness;* which, of course, is inward. But what I insist upon is this—that the consciousness must have a respect to, and a correspondence with, something written. If it be a consciousness of believing, the faith of which the sinner is conscious must be the faith of what is written —of the divine testimony:—if it be the consciousness of any of the effects of faith, it must still accord with what is written—with the representation of these effects given in the word. But to enter on this, would be to anticipate the next branch of my subject.

2. The second of the three views of eternal life, is that which consists in *spiritual character*.

There has often appeared to me, on the subject of which I am now treating, by far too much of a disposition to dwell on the former view of our having eternal life—on the way, I mean, in which we are to know that we are pardoned, or justified. There is a natural propensity in our minds to think of *this* as the chief part of salvation; and it is the

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same as the propensity to desire deliverance from punishment or suffering rather than from sin, from physical rather than from moral evil; and the manner in which the subject has at times been treated, has seemed to me calculated to give countenance and encouragement to this propensity. But in the scriptures, the two appear inseparable—life as to pardoned state, and life as to spiritual character. I have already said, that, whenever a sinner knows and believes the simple testimony of free mercy through the blood and righteousness of Jesus, he has, in the testimony itself, and in the universality and freeness of its assurances to all who believe in it, a ground given him by the God of truth himself, for immediate and full confidence;—and he, therefore, who would frown upon him for immediately trusting, and immediately rejoicing in a sense of God's forgiveness, would frown upon him for that which it is God's very intention, in setting the gospel before him, that he should do, and which, as we have seen, is exemplified in many recorded instances in his own word. But, true as this is, it is not less true, nor less important, that, whenever a sinner believes, with a right understanding of it, the testimony of God, that change of heart takes place, in the production of which the truth is the instrument, and the Holy Spirit the efficient agent—and of which the necessity is so strongly affirmed by the Saviour himself, to Nicodemus—"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This, as we have formerly seen, is the commencement of a spiritual life; which is, in truth, the eternal life begun, that is to be perfected in heaven. If, then, we are right in this, does it not become a matter of fair, and legitimate, and necessary inquiry—How is the possession of *this* life to be known? Is there any thing "written" by which we are to ascertain it? and, if

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there be, what is it? It must be very manifest, that when John says—"These things have I written—*that ye may know* that ye have eternal life"—the meaning is, not merely that they might have confidence, but that they might have such a confidence as is legitimate and well-grounded. To know that they have eternal life, is to know it on grounds that are in accordance with what is written. Their own knowledge of themselves must agree with God's knowledge of them. It must rest on the principles of his word. It must be no delusion, but just and true. The apostle would never wish for them any thing else than this.

If the question, then, be—How is the possession of this *spiritual life* to be known? surely there can be no other answer to it but one. How, in the nature of things, can it be known otherwise than by its own appropriate symptoms and indications? How is the possession of *animal* life known? To the individual himself it is known by certain sensations, and certain powers of motion and action. To others it is known by the pulsation of the heart and arteries, by respiration, and by the various indications of remaining sensibility and power. Now, the life of the soul has its appropriate indications, as well as the life of the body; and by these, of course, it must be known. Where, then, are these to be found, and what are they? They must be sought in the word. If they exist at all, they must be found among the "things that are written." It is true that a great deal must lie in *consciousness.* But here, as before, the consciousness must have some standard to which it corresponds:—it must be the consciousness of something; and this something must be something written. It must be a consciousness of those distinguishing properties and symptoms of the spiritual life, which are specified by the Holy Spirit in the divine word. I confess

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myself unable to imagine any other way by which the possession of spiritual life can in any case be "known."

In Rom. viii. 16. the Apostle Paul says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." I quote the words, because, when rightly understood, they contain an important general principle on this part of my subject—on the nature of the evidence, I mean, by which the possession of the spiritual life is to be known. "The whole of the preceding context is practical. The evidence there of our being 'in Christ,' is our 'walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' 'Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.'* Filial obedience, and filial confidence, are thus connected. The Spirit of God dwells in believers. This indwelling spirit is the earnest of their inheritance—the evidence of their adoption, and of the soundness of their hopes. How, then, is this evidence brought out? How is the possession of this earnest known? Such questions amount to much the same thing with—'What are the indications and proofs of a man's having the Spirit?' And the answer to this, in general terms, is plain:—they are the effects resulting from his residence and operation in the soul; or what are called by the same writer the 'fruits of the Spirit.' The case appears, in the general principle of it, to

* Rom. viii. 12—15.

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stand thus. The Holy Spirit speaks in the word: The same Spirit operates in the heart. There must be a correspondence between his testimony in the word and his operation in the heart. The evidence lies in this correspondence. We take the divine word, as dictated by the Spirit, and containing a declaration of his mind:—we see there what he testifies:—we see especially the description which he there gives of the faith and character of God's children—of the principles and dispositions, the affections and desires, the hopes and fears, and the peculiar walk and conversation, by which they are distinguished. If '*our* spirit,' in the court of conscience, and before the Father of our spirits, bears witness to a correspondence between this description and what has been effected in us by the same Divine Agent—then there is a concurrence of the testimonies. The testimony of God's Spirit, and the testimony of our spirits agree. The one witnesseth with the other. What the Spirit of God has wrought in us harmonizes with what the Spirit of God testifies in the word; and in proportion as our spirits have the inward consciousness of this harmony, do we possess the witness of the Spirit to our being the children of God."* Let no one allege that we deny the necessity of divine influence. It is the Holy Spirit alone, by whom the word of life was given, that effects, by his life-giving energy and purifying virtue, an agreement between the sinner's mind and heart, and what He has testified as to the character of the renewed soul in the written word. This is his work; and the only way in which we can be aware of this work in us, is by consciousness;—consciousness, not of the Spirit's

* Sermons by the Author, recently published.—Serm. xiv. pp. 407—409.

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direct operation, (for of that we know nothing,) but of its effects, and of the harmony of these with what the Spirit has left on record in the scriptures. This is the test. We are not to try the testimony of the Spirit in the scriptures by the work of the Spirit in us, but the work of the Spirit in us by the testimony of the Spirit in the scriptures; or, as it is in the words of John, by "*those things which are written.*"

Let us now look back into the preceding part of this first epistle of John, and we shall find, if I mistake not, the truth of the general observations now made on the words of Paul, largely and clearly substantiated. I know no part of scripture, indeed, in which our present inquiry receives a more distinct and satisfactory answer.

And here I am particularly anxious, that the first point attended to should relate to the views I have already been laying before you of *the way of a sinner's acceptance with God.* This is evidently and primarily amongst the "things written" to which John refers. His statement of it immediately precedes: verses 11, 12. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." There is no subject in which the Spirit's testimony in the word is more frequent, explicit, and peremptory, than this. It may be called the first lesson of revelation—the principle on which the whole is framed. The lesson is, that men are sinners; that as such they are condemned to death; that they must owe their acceptance with God—their life—to free mercy alone, through the finished work of the Mediator; that this must be the guilty transgressor's sole dependance; that it is only by "having the Son," that he can "have life." Here, then, is one of the "things that are written," by which we are

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to "know that we have eternal life." Are we conscious of such exclusive and simple reliance on the work of the Son of God, and on the grace of God in him? Is there, (to take what we conceive to be the principle of Paul's statement respecting the witness of the Spirit) is there, in this matter, a correspondence between the testimony of the Spirit in the word, and the operation of the Spirit in our souls? The very first lesson, he tells us in the word, that he ever teaches a sinner—the very first sentiment and feeling produced in his heart when he becomes a child of God, or when, in the scriptural terms suggested by our present subject, he "passes from death unto life," is *self-renunciation*, the temper of the publican, when, smiting upon his breast, he cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"—Have you, then, reader, been taught this lesson—this elementary lesson of the gospel? Has this feeling of humble and thorough-renunciation of self—and of contrite and lowly dependance on free mercy through the blood of the cross, been effectually wrought into the frame and habit of your mind? Does your consciousness, in this respect, accord with what is written? If not—if, in your confidence towards God, you are resting on any thing, in whole or in part, besides the work and merits of the Son of God—you may be assured your confidence is a delusion. It does not agree with what is written. Your own spirit may be flattering you, or a worse than your own spirit may be deluding you; but the Spirit of God in the word is at variance with your spirit. There is no harmony in the testimonies. "The Spirit does not witness *with* your spirit," but in opposition to it; and we know on which side the deception must lie. The only assurance you can have, consistently with truth, is the assurance of being disowned by Him who will maintain inviolate the dictates of his word.

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Let it be understood, then, that when John says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life," the very first thing he is to be considered as intimating is, that they were to know it by a simple consciousness of a correspondence in the state of their minds, as to the ground of their dependence before God, with that which, under the influence of the Spirit, he had written, as to the way of acceptance with him;—this, as has been said, being the first lesson of the gospel in the written word, and the first lesson of the Spirit in the minds and hearts of sinners.

But we must take a somewhat wider range. We must go a little further back in the epistle, for the symptoms and evidences of the spiritual life. We have seen the first and most essential symptom, which takes the precedence in time, and forms the basis in character, of all the rest—namely, the spirit of entire dependence on the mercy of God through the finished work of Jesus. If *this* symptom be wanting, it is needless for us to go any further in our examination; as needless as it would be to prosecute our inquiry as to the animal life, after ascertaining that the breath has left the body, and that the last fluttering pulsation has ceased from the heart. But wherever this symptom exists, there is an accordance between it and others, without which it is never to be found. Let us see, then, how this apostle writes in other parts of the epistle, taking two or three passages as a specimen, simply as they lie in order.

Chapter i. 6, 7. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another," (that is, fellowship in common with God, and with his Son, verse 3,) "and the blood of Jesus

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Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Does not this language proceed on the assumption that a man may "*say* that he has fellowship with God," while yet he "walks in darkness?" and does it not, therefore, follow, that "walking in the light," that is, *living holily*, is one of the necessary evidences of our being at all interested in the "Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us?" (verse 2.) and in the pardoning efficacy of that blood which "cleanseth from all sin?" *Holy* action, indeed, is as necessary a symptom of the spiritual life, or life of the soul, as action at all is of the animal life, or life of the body.

Chap. ii. 1—6. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Without entering into any critical discussion of the phraseology of these verses, the same general principle is equally apparent from them. The evidence of our interest in Christ as the "propitiation for sin," is our conformity to Christ as an example. To "know that we know him"—to "know that we are in him," are expressions which amount to much the same as "knowing that we have eternal life." And how do we "know that we know him!" The answer is—"Hereby do we know that we know him, *if we keep his commandments.*" And to make it still more explicit, the same thing is stated nega-

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tively—"He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." And how do we "know that we are in him?" The answer is the same—"Whoso *keepeth his word*, in him verily is the love of God perfected:—*hereby* know we that we are in him."

Passing over other similar expressions, let me request the reader's more particular attention to chap. iii, 14—21. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." Surely this is as plain as language can well make it. The very terms correspond with those of our text. "These things write I unto you," says our text, "that ye may *know* that ye have eternal life." And what says he here?—verse 14. "We *know* that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Then, in verse 15. the converse is stated—"Whosoever hateth his brother in his heart is a murderer; and *ye know* that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." And again, verse 19. "Hereby *we know* that we are of the truth, and shall *assure* our hearts before him." Here, then,

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we have *knowledge* and *assurance* respecting our spiritual state. And whence is it that they arise? First of all, let the reader mark, it is from *consciousness*—for in verses 20, 21. it is said—"For, if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." It is obvious, that "our heart condemning us," and our heart "not condemning us," have reference to the criterion of which the apostle speaks. They mean our being *conscious* of possessing it on the one hand, or of not possessing it on the other. *What*, then, is the criterion of which he thus speaks? We are to "know that we have passed from death to life" by this consciousness. Consciousness, then, *of what?* Is it simply the consciousness of believing the truth of the gospel? This, no doubt, is implied. But the consciousness spoken of is, beyond all controversy, something ulterior to this. It is consciousness of one of the fruits of faith—one of the distinguishing properties of the renewed mind, one of the symptoms of the spiritual life:—it is *love to the brethren*. It seems to me impossible to imagine any thing plainer. The test proposed is not one by which we are to try, and know *one another*, although it serves this purpose also. But it is one by which we are to try and know ourselves. It is *by* ourselves *to* ourselves that it is to be applied. "*We* know that *we* have passed from death unto life." "*We* know that *we* are of the truth;"—"if *our* hearts condemn *us*—if *our* hearts condemn *us* not." Assuredly *our* hearts cannot condemn, or not condemn, any but ourselves. No man can be conscious for another. And what is the description given of the love, which is the test or criterion of our having eternal life? It is practical love;—not the professed inward feeling merely, but the feeling as shown by its appropriate fruits.

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It has been alleged, that the fruits of faith cannot be evidences of its reality *to ourselves*, however necessary they may be as proofs of it *to others*;—that to ourselves no additional evidence is either necessary or possible, beyond the simple consciousness of believing. It is very evident that the Apostle John was not of this mind. And we should not forget that his mind is the mind of the Spirit. If language have any meaning, the passage under review affirms that love—brotherly love—love for the truth's sake—love evincing its genuineness by practical effort, and liberality, and self-denial—is an evidence *to ourselves* "that we are of the truth," and that we have "passed from death unto life." These phrases mutually explain each other. Some have said, that to know that we are "of the truth," may signify no more, than to know that what we are conscious to ourselves of believing is the genuine testimony of God—the true apostolic gospel. Even if this were its meaning, it would amount to much the same thing; inasmuch as it involves the admitted possibility of one description at least of mistake and self-deception attending our consciousness, and that too one of first rate importance—the possibility of mistake in regard to the very object of our faith:—so that, while there is no error in the consciousness of believing, there may be material error in that which we are conscious we believe. But we deny that this is the meaning of the phrase. To be "of the truth," refers to something ascertained and settled under this denomination. "The truth" is the gospel—the testimony of God concerning his Son—admitting of no variety; and to be of the truth is to be the real subjects of its influence—knowing, believing, loving it—feeling and exemplifying its spiritual power. "To this end was I born," said Jesus to Pilate, "and for this cause came I into the world, that

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I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one who is OF THE TRUTH heareth my voice." To be "of the truth," then, is to be a genuine subject of Christ's spiritual kingdom. But to put it beyond doubt, that to "know that we are of the truth," signifies more than knowing that what we are conscious of believing is the truth—to put it beyond doubt, that the point to be ascertained is not the quality of that which we believe, but the state of our own minds and hearts towards the true gospel —the apostle employs, in a preceding verse, a different mode of speech, which is quite unsusceptible of any ambiguity of import—"We know that *we have passed from death unto life*, because we love the brethren," verse 14. And surely no words can be more perfectly parallel, in amount of meaning, to those of our present text—"These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know *that ye have eternal life*." I have no doubt that in these words there is an intended reference, in an especial manner, to this very part of the epistle.

The same strain continues in chap. v. 1—5. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God!"—On these verses, questions and observations of a similar kind might be founded, as on the others. But further enlargement is needless. That which I am desirous to establish

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is simply the general principle—that there are other things—things written—by which we are to "know that we have eternal life," besides the simple consciousness of believing the divine testimony. That consciousness, I have already granted, does warrant immediate confidence. The testimony may be received "in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance," and may, in the very instant of receiving it, impart a joyful sense of pardon and acceptance to the sinner's heart. But is there any inconsistency in admitting this, and at the same time contending, on such scriptural grounds as have just been adduced, that the subsequent fruits of faith, in all the graces and virtues of Christian godliness, afford additional or confirmatory proof that in that consciousness there has been no self-deception;—no misapprehension of the truth believed,—and no mistaking of temporary impression and emotion for the enlightened and deliberate acceptance of the gospel? that these fruits of faith are confirmations of the personal confidence originally imparted by the simple perception and conscious belief of the testimony of God?—That many have *said* they believed, who have made it abundantly manifest, in various ways, that they have been deceiving themselves, is matter of fact, established both by scripture and by experience. He, therefore, who "knoweth what is in man," and who has borne his testimony to the human heart as being "deceitful above all things," so that there is no kind and no degree of self-deception of which it would be too much to pronounce it capable,—He has wisely superadded to the present consciousness of believing the truth, the evidence arising from its subsequent influence upon the character. And, in full consistency with the divine declaration of the unlimited deceitfulness of the heart,—so exceedingly jealous is the inspired Apostle John of the hazards of self-deception, that

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he even *doubles his tests.* Let me explain my meaning; for the circumstance is very worthy of notice. We have seen how he makes brotherly love the evidence of saving faith. But is there no possibility of self-deception with regard to the exercise of this very love? "It is love for the truth's sake;"—love to the disciples of Christ, for their divine Master's sake; to the children of God, for their heavenly Father's sake: that is, it is love to the believers of the truth, to the disciples of Christ, to the children of God, AS SUCH. This is the test—not mere general benevolence to men, as has often been erroneously conceived, but "*love to the brethren.*" But with some of "the brethren" a man may chance to be, in various ways, connected; and in these connexions, he may be sensible of esteem and affection. He may be attached to a disciple of Christ by the bond of natural relationship: and it may thus be a disciple whom he loves, while it is not *as a disciple* that he loves him. He may esteem and be fond of him for his integrity in business, and for his amiable dispositions, his courteous affability, his obliging kindness, in the intercourse of life; and yet, instead of loving him "for the truth's sake," he may smile at his profession of the truth as his weakness, and regret and lament, instead of approving and rejoicing in it. Instead of forming the ground and reason of his love, it may be the only thing about him that he dislikes. There are, then, possibilities of self-deception, in regard to that love which is the test of faith. On this account, as I have said, the Apostle doubles his tests. Having affirmed love to be the test of faith, he affirms something farther to be the test of love; that is, the evidence of its being love that regards its objects as belonging to Christ,—as fellow-believers of the truth. Thus he writes in verses already quoted, chap. v. 1, 2. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ

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is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth them also that are begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." In the connexion in which these words stand, I can understand them in no other sense than this,—that the evidence of our love to the "children of God" being of the right sort,—of its regarding them as such, and arising from our love to the common Father of the family, is, our general obedience to other parts of his will: that, if we are not otherwise showing our love to God by "keeping his commandments," it is a proof that our love to the brethren must regard them under some other character, and must spring from some different source than "love to Him that begat."

But is not all this, some will be ready to say, calculated to subject believers to incessant uncertainty and doubt, rather than to impart to them the knowledge of their having eternal life? I would say in reply, first, that there is a previous question, namely, Have we not been giving the plain sense of scripture? Is there any possibility of interpreting the language of the Apostle John, in the passages quoted, on any other principles? They seem to me, indeed, not to require interpretation, but to contain as plain and explicit statements as words are capable of conveying. What else, then, are we to make of them? Are we to set aside their obvious meaning, to put them to the torture, and force them to give a different deliverance, in order that believers may retain their peace and comfort more easily, with less necessity for self-jealousy and the vigilance and constancy of practical godliness? Far be it. Nor is there any need. For, secondly, it is very evident that John was of a very different mind from those who fancy this view of matters fitted only to engender doubt and despondency. He saw no such

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consequences. In the first chapter, verses 3, 4, he says—"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." He writes to them the testimony of the Gospel, that they might have fulness of joy. Does he, then, intend immediately to damp and unsettle the very joy he meant to inspire, when he proceeds to say, verses 4—7, "This, then, is the message, which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin?" Assuredly not. He takes it for granted, that wherever the joy sprung from a right understanding and faith of the divine testimony, the faith that produced the joy would, at the same time, produce holy principles and holy practice; and that where the latter did not appear, the former was indubitably spurious. Again: so far is this inspired writer from conceiving, that to make love to the brethren a test and evidence of our having "passed from death unto life" was only to fill believers with the doubts and fears of a self-righteous spirit, and to unhinge and destroy their confidence,—that he pronounces it, as we have seen, in the most unequivocal terms, *the very means of* "*knowing* that we are of the truth," and of "*assuring* our hearts" before God: for indeed he had no conception of a consciousness of faith, without a consciousness of love. So that the very way of trying ourselves, which some modern Christians allege can have no effect but that of filling the mind with disquieting uncertainty and apprehension, is the very way which the Apostle pre-

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scribes for the attainment of knowledge, confidence, and assurance.

It is true, there is an alternative. So there must be; so there ought to be. Let us, for a moment, take up again the different views already given of eternal life. Is it not true, that life as to *spiritual character* is as essential a part of life eternal, as life in regard to *pardoned state?* that sanctification is as necessary a part of salvation as justification? And in order to our "knowing that we have eternal life," is it not, therefore, as indispensable that we should know we have the latter as that we should know we have the former? The same faith that justifies sanctifies. The same faith that introduces to a state of pardon, becomes the principle of spiritual life in the soul. The two are inseparable. If our faith does not sanctify us, it has not justified us. Our peace with God, we may be assured, is not legitimate, unless the faith from which it has arisen "purifies the heart," "works by love," and is "the victory that overcometh the world." I am not, in saying so, departing from my position that the simple spiritual perception and belief of the gospel testimony,—the testimony of "grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord," is enough to give immediate and well-founded peace and confidence towards God. No: I delight in the persuasion and announcement of this blessed truth. It is one of the most animating in the ministry of the gospel. "The entrance of God's word giveth light." It diffuses through the soul of the believing sinner a joy unknown and unfelt before. But all the parts of divine truth are in harmony; and each ought to have its due degree of prominence. John most clearly teaches us, that we are not to confine ourselves to the mere consciousness of believing, making that our sole inquiry;—that we must go farther; that we must look to the

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subsequent effects of our faith, as the proofs, the substantial and unequivocal proofs, of its regarding the true object of faith revealed in the gospel, and consequently of our interest in Christ and our having eternal life. John, I say, does this. And Paul does this. And Christ himself does this. Listen to his own words:—"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."* This is a most important and decisive passage in our present argument, and full of practical instruction. Is it asked, How are we to make it appear that we are Christ's disciples?—the answer is—"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples," verse 8. How are we to continue in the enjoyment or experience of his love? "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love," verses 9, 10. How is the Saviour to

* John xv. 8—15.

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have joy in us, and our joy in him to be full? "These things,"—namely respecting their fruitfulness as branches in the vine, their keeping his commandments, their loving one another,—"these things have I spoken unto you that my joy in you might remain, and that your joy might be full," verse 11.* How are we to know that we are amongst the friends of Jesus? "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you," verse 14.

It is true that Jesus hath said—and blessed be his name for having said and for having recorded it!—"him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Yes: he receives into his friendship,—"receives graciously and loves freely," every sinner who comes to him in simplicity of heart, and casts himself unreservedly upon his mercy. But this bears no sort of resemblance to a case with which it has been compared—weakly and strangely compared; namely, a man's writing on a slip of paper, in presence of another, the following words—"Whoever receives from my hand this paper and this declaration, I hold him for my friend," and then, having put his name to it, presenting it to the indi-

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* "That my joy in you might remain, and that your joy might be full." The arrangement of the words in the first clause by our translators is ambiguous,—"that my joy might remain in you." The English reader is apt to connect the words "in you" with the verb "remain," as if the joy of which the Saviour spoke was a joy possessed by them, and of which he wished the continuance in their hearts. But he evidently intends to express the idea of a mutual or reciprocal joy—his joy in them, and their joy in him: and he teaches them that if they adhered to his will, in faithful, and impartial, and persevering obedience, his joy in them should remain, and their own joy in him should be full.—I have not thought it necessary to say any thing in the way of proof on the verses preceding—because it is so very obvious, that "abiding in his love" signifies abiding, not in the exercise of their love to him, but in the enjoyment of his love to them.

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vidual, and saying to him—"Receive this from my hand, and believe my testimony, for I am a creditable person." Who does not, at one glance, perceive the fallacy of this comparison? What is there in it at all analogous to the case which it is designed to illustrate? That which, in the latter, corresponds to the written paper must, it is presumed, be the written word of God. Is it then, by his having this word put into his *hand*, that any sinner is assured of his being a friend of Christ? Is it by any such external sign that the Saviour gives any individual such assurance? No, verily. Such a transaction as the one described amounts to the very same thing as naming the individual, name and surname. It is puerile to say, there is no name in the paper. The act of writing it in his presence, and putting it into his hand, is as effectual a singling of him out, as if the name had been written, and a distinctive description annexed to it. But it is not by having the word of the Lord *put into his hand* that any sinner can know his reconciliation to God, or his being one of the friends of Christ. Were that the case, we should only require to present a man with a New Testament, in order to his being so, and being assured of it; and all must be the friends of Jesus into whose hands his word has come. But it is not so. The sinner requires not merely to receive the divine testimony into his *hand*, but to receive it by faith into his *heart*, in order to his being reconciled to God, and reckoned amongst the true friends of Christ:—and those friends, having received his testimony, are to be distinguished by its practical influence: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."*

* The comparison referred to in the text is taken from the little tract by Dr. Malan, before cited. I have reason to know, that the

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It is not enough, then, for a man to say—"He that believeth shall be saved; I am conscious of believing; therefore I know I am saved:" or—"He

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Dr. occasionally had recourse, when in this country, to the very method he describes in the tract. Lest any, however, should suspect that the allusion I have made to his comparison is not sufficient to do it impartial justice, I give the whole in its connexion;—I only wish I could have done it the justice of quoting the original, or of re translating it:—

"*Pastor.* 'He who believes in Jesus Christ, has eternal life;' John iii. 36. do you not know this declaration of the word of God? Very well, but you appear to think it obscure or equivocal. *John.* Never, I do not believe that. Yes, all those who say—I believe in Jesus Christ, are the elected of God, bought of the Lord, with saved souls. All the world are then chosen, for there are many people who dare say that they believe in the Son of God. *Pastor.* You observe, that the word does not say, that those who say they believe, or pretend to believe, in Jesus Christ, or who imagine falsely that they believe, have eternal life; but this infallible word says, that those who believe in effect and really, have this life; so then, the multitude in Christian nations who profess to believe in Jesus Christ, is not proof that they believe in effect; but if this multitude believe in effect on the Saviour, certainly they will have eternal life. *John.* Thus, then, sir, whoever is able to assure himself that he believes on the Saviour, then he will be certain that he has actually the life eternal, and that he is also elected.—(*The minister took a little bit of paper and wrote upon it these words:*) 'Whoever receives from my hand this paper, and this declaration, I hold him for my friend: (*he put his name to these words, and presenting it to John, he said to him,*) Receive this from my hand, and believe my testimony, for I am a creditable person:'—(*John took the paper and read what the minister had written.*) *Pastor.* How am I to regard you, John, after this testimony that I have given you? *John.* I have for a friend the minister. *Pastor.* Is it from you to me that this friendship flows, or is it from me to you? *John.* It is from you to me. *Pastor.* Do you hesitate to say that I am your friend, and that you have become mine? *John.* If I said I did not believe you, I would tell you a lie. *Pastor.* Do you, then, look with affection towards me, or is it I with affection towards you? for you are assured that I am your friend, and that I regard you as mine. *John* I regard nothing but your good-will in my affairs. *Pastor.* And how are you assured that this good will is addressed to you? *John.* Because you have been pleased to say it, and I do not doubt your veracity. *Pastor.* I am sure that I have not written your name, as my friend; why then do you know that I have mentioned you in particular? *John.* You have written with your own hand, that whoever receiveth this paper, you shall have him for a friend; and because I have received this paper, and because I know that you are of good authority, I have no doubt at all upon the subject. *Pastor.* That is, then, because you have been certain on the one hand

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that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life; I am conscious to myself that I do believe on the Son of God; therefore I am sure I have everlasting life." It may be perfectly true. The consciousness may regard the true testimony of the gospel; and the conclusion may be in accordance with fact,—that is, with the real character and condition of him who draws it. But if it be so, there will be, along with the consciousness of believing, an additional consciousness—the consciousness of *loving*, and the consciousness of desiring and endeavouring to keep God's commandments; a consciousness of the inward symptoms of that spiritual life, which uniformly commences at the same moment that the sinner, believing in Christ, passes from condemnation to acceptance and life in the eye of law. —True, indeed, there will at the same time be a consciousness of failure,—of incessant and universal failure,—of offending in many things, and of imperfection in all. This is a consciousness as indispensable as the other. He who flatters himself into the fancy that he has "already attained, or is already perfect," is a miserable self-deceiver. How, then do you ask, is peace to be maintained in the soul? How is it possible, that, with this unceasing consciousness of failure, the believer should ever enjoy it? I answer—in the same way in which that Apostle enjoyed it, who says of himself—"I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me

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of having received this paper from my hand, and on the other hand, that I am of good authority, that you are certain of possessing, at the present, my affection. *John.* I do not think that I am able to speak stronger upon this point, without insulting your veracity."

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from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."* "The peace of God, keeping the heart and mind through Christ Jesus," is not incompatible with the inward struggle between the opposite principles of the flesh and the Spirit. If it were, of what bosom on earth could that peace be the cheering inmate? Whilst with the consciously sincere desire and endeavour to "glorify God in our body and spirit which are God's," there mingles a consciousness of sin and shortcoming in every act and word and thought, this latter consciousness should just lead the believer to the same source of peace from which he originally derived it. It should keep alive upon his mind a constant and deep impression of the necessity of such recurrence. The beginning of his confidence must be held fast unto the end. He is not to gather something of his own in the course of his progress in the divine life, to be associated with the work of Christ as the ground of his confidence. The work of Christ must stand alone, gloriously alone; infinitely sufficient in itself, and dishonoured and contaminated by every association of it with the very best of human service. Even to the end, Christ must be to the believing soul "all its salvation, and all its desire." The last prayer must be the same with the first, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" The whole experience of the spiritual conflict must give increasing simplicity as well as fervency to his glorying in the cross; his growing sensibility to his own unworthiness making him feel the more the entireness of his dependence on grace.—This is the view given of the matter in 1 John i. 9, 10, with ii. 1, 2. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just

* Rom. vii. 22—25.

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to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." These words contain a statement admirably adapted to preserve at once from *presumption*, and from *despair*; guarding alike against each of the two extremes. Who does not feel presumption in sin repressed, when he hears the declaration, "These things write I unto you, THAT YE SIN NOT?" and who, amidst his consciousness of many sins and universal failure, does not feel the weight of despair lifted from his spirit, and his heart still cheered with a sense of God's love and with the light of hope, when it is added, "And if any man sin WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS?" But, while we must be ever "looking unto Jesus," and making Him, who is our "propitiation" and our "Advocate" our simple and exclusive confidence; not only will our peace be the more steadfast; there is another effect which will at the same time result,—the holy influence of the truth will be the greater and the more apparent, the practical efficiency of faith being in proportion to its simplicity. The same believing view of the cross, which conveys peace to the conscience, conveys at the same time purity to the heart; so that there is some radical and deadly error, when a man professes that by "looking unto Jesus" he has found peace, if there be no appearance of his having found holiness. Of this, however, we shall have occasion to say a little more by and by. I close this branch of my subject with the words of the Apostle Peter, by which the statements that

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have been made are strikingly confirmed. He enjoins upon believers that they "give diligence to make their calling and election sure:" which amounts to much the same thing as "knowing that they had eternal life."—And what is his inspired direction for the attainment of this end? Is it simply to think of their *consciousness of believing?* By no means. Simple faith in Jesus is *presupposed;* and the exhortation given is to its various practical manifestations:—"Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, (fortitude,) and to fortitude knowledge, and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren (Gr. idle) nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."* And the mention of this "abundant entrance into Christ's everlasting kingdom," leads me forward naturally to the inquiry, how believers are to "know that they have eternal life," in regard to their *future prospects*—"the life that is to come."

3. I come now, as I have said in the close of the preceding paragraph, to consider the question, how believers are to "know that they have eternal life,"

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* 2 Peter i. 5—11.

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as it regards their *future prospects*, their hopes of the life to come.—And to this question, my general answer is very short. We have seen what is written, whereby believers are to know that they have life in regard to *legal state*, and in regard to *spiritual character*. When the inquiry, then, respects their prospects for the life to come, my reply to it is, that their security for the life of heaven arises from a *union of the evidences of the other two*. Thus:—if we know, in the first instance, our having "passed from death unto life" in regard to our state before God, or, in other words, our having our sins forgiven, and the sentence of death withdrawn,—by simply taking God at his word, in that testimony which assures of acceptance and forgiveness all who come to him in the name of his Son:—if, again, we know our having become the subjects of spiritual life, by consciousness of the symptoms of that life within us, as they are described in the scriptures, and by all the manifestations of faith there specified,—by the correspondence between the Spirit's testimony in the word, and the Spirit's work in our souls:—we know that we have a legitimate and scripturally-founded hope of the life to come, by the *union of both*.

When a sinner spiritually understands and receives the gospel, the same truth which gives him a sense of forgiveness, and peace with God, necessarily gives him at the same time, *hope*. The fear of the wrath to come, or of the second death, arises from a consciousness of guilt and of righteous condemnation, and must always be in proportion to the vividness and depth of such consciousness. The same faith, therefore,—that is, the belief of the same truth, that takes away the sense of condemnation and the fears of wrath, must proportionally impart the hope of life. The two are, in the nature of things, inseparable, and may, indeed, be regarded

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as one and the same.—Now, it is of essential consequence to observe, (what has before been briefly hinted,) that the ground of the hope which thus enters the mind when the gospel is believed, continues ever after the same, without addition, without change. The sinner can never have any thing else,—and never any thing more. He may obtain clearer and larger views of the foundation of his hope; but if the grace of God through the finished work of Jesus was its ground at the first (and if it had any other it was false and unsanctioned;) the same grace, through the same all-perfect work, must continue to be its ground to the last. The entire course of the believer's experience and service, however long, however spiritual, however zealous, and active, and useful, however beneficial to men, however glorifying to God,—can add nothing whatever to it. Nothing thought, or felt, or said, or done by him, can ever be incorporated with it without profanity, and without subverting, in regard to the sinner who would so desecrate and dishonour it, its power to save. The work which constitutes this foundation was completed on Calvary. It was to that finished work of substitutionary obedience unto death that Jehovah set his seal of approbation and acceptance, when he raised his Son from the dead. It remains to this hour the same; and so does the divine satisfaction in it. He who builds upon it simply as it stands, is safe: but he who presumes to introduce into it any thing of his own,—to combine with it any thing whatever of his own doing or his own devising, forfeits life and hope by the presumption:—he "falls from grace," and "Christ becomes of no effect unto him." Let the believer, then, remember, that, make of his experience what he will, no part of it must he ever think of incorporating with the work of Christ in the ground of his hope. Nothing of ours can be

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admitted there; nothing done by us, nothing wrought in us; neither faith itself, nor any of its fruits. "Other foundation," either in whole or in part, "can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Who, indeed, can ever add to what Jesus, with his dying breath, declared he had finished? The attempt is a denial of its perfection. Who can mend without marring—who can touch without polluting it? It is a work, in which the hand of the Master has left nothing to be filled up or improved by the disciple. It stands forth in all its divine excellence and completeness, challenging the admiration, and inviting the confidence, of the chief of sinners, but disclaiming any co-operation from the chief of saints. Who will presume to affix any codicil to that will, to which the seal of Heaven has been appended, sanctioning its provisions as perfect and unalterable? To the very last hour of the believer's life, the ground of his hope remains the same. He wishes no change. The more he knows of himself, the more sensitively does he shrink from the thought of associating aught of his with the divine work of his Lord: and the more he knows of his Lord, the firmer does his confidence become, and with the greater simplicity and exclusiveness does he adopt the Apostle's language, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

But while this is truth, important truth, on which we cannot too strongly insist;—that no obedience of ours, nothing of ours whatever, at the close any more than at the commencement of our course, can ever come to be any part of the ground of our confidence:—yet in perfect harmony with this truth, we say, without hesitation, that the soundness and legitimacy of our hope, as truly resting on the right foundation, is manifested by the influence, in

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other respects, of the faith from which it arises. This is clear and simple. There is no mysticism in it—no difficulty, even to the weakest mind, in comprehending it. The same faith which imparts hope, is described as "purifying the heart," Acts xv. 9; as "working by love," Gal. v. 6;—as "the victory that overcometh the world," 1 John v. 4, 5. If these, then, according to scripture, are concomitant effects of the faith of the Gospel; if they are uniformly such, wherever that faith exists:—does it not unavoidably follow, that the hope is not genuine, but spurious and delusive, which is not accompanied by them? The faith itself enters not, nor do any of these effects of it, the love, the purity, the victory over the world, enter, in any degree whatever, into the ground of the hope; but the soundness of the hope is ascertained, first by the scriptural simplicity of the ground on which it professes to rest, and then by the evidence that such is its ground, arising from the appearance along with it of these concomitant effects.

Let us take one or two scriptural illustrations of this position. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him" (in CHRIST —ἐπ' αὐτῷ) "purifieth himself even as he is pure."* —In these words, we have the *object* of hope, the *ground* of hope, and the *influence* of hope.—Does not the passage, then, which is so very pointed and explicit in stating the uniformity of the influence—"*Every man* that has this hope in Christ purifies himself as Christ is pure"—does it not, I say, warrant, and even necessitate, the conclusion, that

* 1 John iii. 2, 3.

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where the influence does not appear,—where he who professes to entertain the hope is *not* so purifying himself,—there must be some mistake, as to the object, or the ground, or both—some hypocritical profession, or some self-delusion? The affirmation is not, that every man who has this hope in Christ must be pure as Christ is pure,—that is, must be free from all sin:—it is only that he "*purifieth himself* even as Christ is pure." This is his desire, this his exercise. His heart is set upon conformity to Jesus, as the highest point of his holy ambition; and by prayer, and all the instituted means of spiritual improvement, he seeks the attainment of this progressive conformity in holiness. He who is not doing this, shows that he is not really possessed of the hope described: for he is not under its influence. Consider the very nature of the hope. What is it? It is the hope of being like Christ, and of deriving our perfected happiness from the perfection of this conformity. Now, do we ever hope for any thing which we do not desire? No: the very idea of hope implies that the object of it is agreeable to us. And do we ever in earnest desire any thing, which, when actually set before us, and placed within reach of attainment, we leave unheeded, without pursuing or making any effort to acquire it? No: while every object of hope is an object of desire; whatever is the object of desire we seek to obtain. If, therefore, we are really *hoping* for likeness to Christ, we must be *desiring* likeness to Christ; and if we be sincerely and earnestly desiring it, we must be *seeking its attainment*. It is on this simple principle that John argues; for his words are not merely a declaration, but an argument. We cannot live in sin, if we are hoping for and desiring holiness:—we cannot be happy in sin, if we are really expecting to derive our future felicity from holiness. "Eternal life" is a life of

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perfect happiness springing from perfect holiness. If we indeed have this in hope, we must of necessity be now seeking to be holy. Holiness and happiness must be associated in our minds; and the association will not regard the future only, but the present;—for if holiness be fitted to give happiness hereafter, it must be fitted to give happiness now; and if we are expecting our happiness from it hereafter, we must be seeking our happiness from it now. Our hope will thus give the tone to our life. We shall "purify ourselves as Christ is pure;" or, in the words of another Apostle, we shall "follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." And if this be true, does it not follow as an unavoidable sequence, that no man who has not holiness has any well-founded hope of "seeing the Lord,"—which is the same thing as any well-founded hope of "eternal life?"

2 Cor. v. 1—6. "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now, he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident," &c.—In these interesting verses, in the explanation of which I cannot enlarge—we have, 1. The *object* of hope,—the restoration of the "earthly house of this tabernacle," (our bodily frame, the soul's temporary lodging,) at the "resurrection of the just," in a new state of glory, and purity, and incorruption, to be the permanent residence of its divinely

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sanctified inhabitant:—2. The *earnest* of its attainment, consisting in the present possession of the Holy Spirit,—a possession of which the appropriate manifestation is "the fruits of the Spirit:"—and, 3. This possession of the Spirit *imparting confidence to hope:*—"Who hath also given us the earnest of the Spirit. THEREFORE we are always confident."—These things being so, is it not right,—is it not indispensable,—do not both scripture and reason require it,—that, in considering how we are to "know that we have eternal life" as the object of well-authorized hope, we make it a part of our inquiry whether we have the *earnest*,—the present earnest of future possession. And in what other way is it possible to find an answer to such an inquiry, than by examining whether the fruits of the Spirit be produced by us? "Hereby we do know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us:"* "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit,"†

A distinction has been made by some writers, between the "full assurance of *faith*" and the "full assurance of *hope*;" which has by many been adopted, I cannot but think, without due deliberation. They are both, it is true, scriptural phrases:—"Let us draw near with true hearts, *in full assurance of faith*, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water:"‡—"And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the *full assurance of hope* unto the end."§—In entering on the consideration of this distinction, which is important, and intimately connected with the present branch of

* 1 John iii. 24. † Chap. iv. 13. ‡ Heb. x. 22. § Heb. vi. 11.

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ing subject, I must be allowed to premise an observation or two respecting the meaning and apostolic use of the word in Greek which our translators render *assurance* and *full assurance*. I have often thought that this word (πληροφορια) has had at times more definiteness and precision of meaning attached to it, than really belongs to it as used by Paul. I refer to the systems of those who found upon his expressions what they formally denominate *the doctrine of assurance,—the doctrine of the assurance of faith*.—In such systems it signifies (although, as we shall see, those who so use it are not always consistent with themselves) *absolute undoubting certainty*. Now it is at once admitted, that with such certainty the divine testimony is entitled to be believed. It is the duty of every intelligent creature to yield an undoubting credence to whatever is ascertained to have come from Him "with whom it is impossible to lie." It is in this respect—the immutable veracity of the testifier—that "the testimony of God is greater than that of men."* Those, therefore, who hold (as some, we have shown, do) that their own personal salvation is as really a part of the divine record as the fact of Christ's resurrection, or the satisfaction of God in the work of his Son, are doubtless (were this view at all correct) consistent with themselves in maintaining assurance in this sense. Were it indeed as they say —to entertain a single doubt of their salvation would be to doubt the divine veracity, and to "make God a liar."—And the same thing might be said of those, too, who hold that the sinner, when called to believe the gospel, is called to believe, as a part of the divine testimony, that *Christ is his*." If this

* 1 John v. 9.

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were a part of the testimony of God, it would, without question, be his duty to believe it with an immediate and unwavering assurance; nothing short of this coming fully up to what the divine word is entitled to. But we formerly saw the fallaciousness of such statements.

It appears to me, that in the New Testament, the term is not used with any such definite and explicit precision; but that it simply means *a strong persuasion or confidence*, such as admits of *various degrees*.—There are only two other places where it occurs, besides the two already mentioned. In one of them, Col. ii. 2. the strong expression, "unto all riches of the *full assurance* of understanding," appears to mean a clear, comprehensive, soul-establishing acquaintance with divine truth, or, as Doddridge translates it, "the richest and most assured understanding of the gospel." Now in this application of the word, there is evidently the idea of progressive degrees of attainment in divine knowledge; which after all, the Apostle knew, would still be very imperfect here; as he elsewhere teaches:—"For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known."—But it is to the other occurrence of the word that I especially call the reader's attention. It is in 1 Thess. i. 5, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and *in much assurance*."—The word, it ought to be noticed, which is here rendered simply *assurance*, is the same with that which, in its other three occurrences, is translated *full assurance*. Here, therefore, we have "*much full assurance*." The accompanying adjective "*much*" clearly shows, that, whatever notions some may choose to attach to the word in theological systems, the Apostle uses it with a latitude of meaning,—to express what was suscep-

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tible of diverse measures,—something of which there might be, if not properly *little*, yet various degrees of abundance. And this will be still more evident, when the passage is compared with another—"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity (love) of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth."* Here, the reader will observe, to the very persons who had received the gospel with full assurance, with much full assurance, he says, "your faith *groweth exceedingly*." Now, how could this be? How could it grow beyond full assurance, if the word were used by Paul with the definiteness wherewith some have adopted it into their systems?

Some, I am aware, of those who have so adopted it, may be found at times allowing that the assurance for which they contend is an assurance which admits of degrees. But in admitting this, they are inconsiderate and self-contradictory. For surely, if any thing be self-evident, this is—that all *degrees of assurance* must of necessity imply corresponding *degrees of uncertainty*. They who consistently hold what is termed the doctrine of assurance, must hold that the believer in Christ should never doubt of his state, any more than he should doubt the truth of the divine testimony. Such assurance is evidently incompatible with doubt,—with any doubt. Where doubt begins, assurance ends. Yet what higher degree of assurance can there be, than assurance without doubt—undoubting assurance?—The truth is, there can be no *higher*,—and, in strict propriety of speech, there can be no *lower*. For assurance that is not undoubting, or, in other words,

* 2 Thess. i. 3.

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doubting assurance, is a plain and palpable contradiction; the same as if we should speak of *uncertain certainty*. All, therefore, who speak of *degrees* of assurance, must necessarily take the word in a looser and more general acceptation;—forgetting, however, that the moment they do so, they take away from it all its fitness for being the basis of a peculiar scheme of doctrine, or the *vox signata* of a party:—for, in the general sense of strong persuasion or confidence towards God, it has in it nothing that is at all distinctive of one scheme or of one party from another. It is in this general sense, I am persuaded, that the Apostle Paul employs the word:—and on this account I have long been of opinion, that a great deal more than enough has been made of the word, when a distinct doctrine has been founded upon the use of it. It is evidently in its *absolute* sense alone, that it can properly be made the basis of any peculiar tenet. And when taken in its absolute sense, and pronounced, in that sense, to be, in every instance, indispensable, its absurdity becomes absolute. For, to affirm that there can be no faith but the faith of assurance—what is it but to affirm that there can be no faith but what is perfect;—that it cannot be weaker or stronger, either in different believers, or in the same believer at different times; and that it is unsusceptible either of growth or of declension! And what is this but to affirm, that the spiritual discernment or knowledge of the truth must in all be the same, and in all perfect! for to this discernment faith must of necessity be proportioned. And does such a hypothesis accord with fact? does it accord with reason? does it not accord with scripture?—That the sinner, on his receiving the gospel, MAY have a full assurance, or undoubting confidence before God, of the safety of his state, on the ground of the full and free mercy which it reveals through the blood of

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the cross, I have already more than once admitted. But there is a wide difference between MAY and MUST. To affirm that every sinner, on his first believing apprehension of the truth, *must* have this full assurance, this undoubting confidence, is, I repeat, to affirm, that the discernment and faith of all believing sinners must at the very outset be the same, and that in all it must be perfect. A large portion of the controversy seems to me to turn upon this simple but important difference between MAY and MUST.

The distinction, to which I have alluded, between the *assurance of faith* and the *assurance of hope*, is in itself a sufficiently intelligible one. It is similar to one on which I have all along been proceeding,—that, namely, between the belief of the divine testimony in the word, and confidence of personal interest in the blessings of life eternal which the testimony reveals; a very obvious distinction,—the truth of God's word, and the reality of any sinner's interest in its blessings, being two things altogether independent of each other, and resting on different kinds of evidence.—The distinction has been stated thus: "There is this remarkable difference between the assurance of faith and the assurance of hope, that when men first become possessed of the former, they obtain it without their using any endeavours in search of it; for it comes to them unsent for, as it did to the Thessalonians:—whereas the assurance of hope is enjoyed only by those who "give all diligence to obtain it."*—Again: "The first was called for in a man's first profession of the faith upon his first hearing the gospel, in order to his being acknowledged for a Christian. The assurance of hope,

* Sandeman's Letters on Theron and Aspasio, vol. ii. p. 170.

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again, is an enjoyment proposed to them that believe, and have already begun the Christian race, which they were called to follow after, and to give all diligence to obtain."*

When I say that there does not appear to me any foundation for a separation of the two, my readers may possibly be startled, as if this were hardly in full agreement with my former statements. The following observations, however, will clearly show, I trust, that there is a perfect harmony; that the two are inseparable; that they must bear an undeviating proportion to each other; that they must rise and sink, wax and wane, live and die together.

First. The *belief of the truth* is the *spring or origin of hope.*—The two are invariably conjoined in the word of God, as cause and effect. Thus in Heb. vi. 13—19, immediately following the exhortation to "give all diligence to the *full assurance of hope* unto the end," the apostle says;—"For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail."—The word and oath of God are addressed to faith;

* Sandeman's Letters on Theron and Aspasio, vol. ii. p. 170.

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and then, from the belief of what God has declared by his word, and attested by his oath, arises the hope,—the "sure and steadfast" hope, that is "the anchor of the soul," and that "enters within the vail." Again:—"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God."* Here, in like manner, hope is inseparably associated with "faith in God," as "raising up Jesus from the dead." It is founded in it. It arises out of it. So it is in all the statements of Scripture. And how could it be otherwise? For so it is in the nature of things. "Therefore, being justified *by faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,—by whom also we have had access *by faith* into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice *in hope* of the glory of God."† "The *God of hope* fill you with all joy and peace *in believing*, that ye may *abound in hope*, through the power of the Holy Ghost."‡ It should be recollected, that faith respects the *promise* as well as the *testimony* of God. We believe the former to be faithful, as well as the latter to be true. In this respect, faith and hope are almost identified; for the faith of the promise cannot in possibility be separated from the hope of its fulfilment. Hence what the apostle

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* 1 Peter i. 18—21. † Rom. v. 1, 2.
‡ Rom. xv. 13.

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says of faith in Heb. xi. 1, that it is "the confidence of things hoped for."

Secondly. If hope thus springs from the faith of the truth, or, more correctly, from the truth believed, it follows, that in proportion to the simplicity and firmness of our faith must be the strength and liveliness of our hope. This seems a natural and almost self-evident sequence. Yet it may be worth while to illustrate it by two or three examples.—Of *Abraham* it is said, "Who is the father of us all (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations) before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were; who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations: according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform."* Here the faith and the hope are proportionals; the assured confidence of expectation, such as bore down before it every obstacle that seemed to forbid its indulgence, arising from the strength of his faith in "Him whom he believed;" in his faithfulness to his promise, and in his ability and willingness to fulfil it. The same proportion appears between his faith and his hope, when it is said of him, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he

* Rom. iv. 16—21.

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went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."* His *hope* both of the earthly or typical, and of the heavenly or eternal inheritance, was so vigorous as to enable him to throw himself unreservedly upon God, in expectation of the fulfilment of his word, because his *belief* of that word was firm.—The same connexion, and necessary relative proportion, between faith and hope, appears in the character given of *Moses:* "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."† That "respect unto the recompense of the reward," by which he was animated to spurn away the temptations of honour, and pleasure, and wealth, the three principal objects between which the desires and pursuits of the world are divided, and to give the preference to affliction and reproach with God's people, arose from his faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and was proportioned, in the power of its self-denying influence, to the measure of that faith.—And, not to multiply exemplifications of what hardly required confirmation by examples at all—I add only the experience of *Paul.* How strikingly do the assurance of faith and the assurance of hope connect themselves,—the one arising from the other, and both blending into one delightful sentiment of triumphant confi-

* Heb. xi. 8—10. † Heb. xi. 24—26.

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dence,—when he thus pours forth the fulness of an humble, thankful, and rejoicing spirit: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (as it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter:) nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!"*

To my mind, indeed, it appears no better than a contradiction in terms, to speak of the assurance of faith without the assurance of hope. It is to make hope spring from something else than the truth believed; and to affirm that the truth may be believed, and yet hope not to be at all enjoyed. I say, *not at all*. For if the *assurance* of faith, that is, the fullest and firmest faith, may exist without the *assurance*, or the fulness and firmness, of hope; then is the principle of proportion between the one and the other done away; of which the unavoidable consequence is, that faith may exist without hope altogether: for, if there may be the highest degree of the one, without the highest degree of the other, then may there be every inferior degree of the one without the corresponding degree of the other; and

* Rom. viii. 33—39.

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so we are led to the possibility of faith without hope at all. And this is a very hazardous assumption; inasmuch as it follows from it, that when the sinner, who believes the truth but does not enjoy hope, comes to obtain hope, it must, in his case, be derived from something distinct from, and additional to, the truth believed; that is, it must be founded in something else than the gospel.

Thirdly. Hope thus springing from faith, and being proportioned to it, the next step in our argument is equally simple; namely, that the *effects* of any principle must necessarily be proportioned in their measure to the degree of vigour in which the principle exists. This being undeniable, the *fruits* of faith must be according to the *strength* of faith. If a man professes lively faith, while the results in his life bear no correspondence with his profession, we may be assured he is deceiving himself. As it is true, that where there is no fruit at all, there is no faith at all; it is equally true, that the abundance of fruit will be proportioned to the abundance of the principle from which it grows; as surely as the richness of the crop will correspond to the fertility of the soil. That professor's faith, let him pretend what he may, is neither clear nor strong, if it be not practical and productive; and in proportion as it is practical and productive, does it evince itself clear and strong.—The evidences of genuine faith, or of the sincere and steadfast "belief of the truth," are its practical effects, in "all holy conversation and godliness," in "doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God." Now what, let me ask, are the evidences of personal interest in the blessings of salvation? Why, they are *the very same.* So that, as the reader must immediately perceive, the evidences of the genuineness of our faith identify with the evidences of the soundness of our hope. There is, as I have already mention-

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ed, an obvious difference between the truth of the divine testimony and the reality of my interest in the blessings it reveals: and a corresponding difference between the evidence of the one and of the other. But there is no difference between the evidence of the genuineness of my faith, and that of the soundness and legitimacy of my hope. Whatever proves the one, proves equally the other.—"The assurance of hope," it has been said by the writer formerly quoted, Mr. Sandeman, "holds pace, first and last, with the work and labour of love. If love cools, hope languishes. If the former be fervent, so is the latter." This proceeds upon the principle, that the practical exercise of love is the evidence of the legitimacy of hope. I grant it to be true. But did this writer (acute, and scornfully dogmatical, but not always consistent,) not perceive, that, as hope bears proportion to love, so does love bear proportion to faith:—so that, while it is true that "as love cools hope languishes," it is not less true, that as faith declines, love cools. "Faith," the apostle says, "worketh by love."* If it be so, then the "work of faith," and the "labour of love" must always bear an exact relation to each other. The labour of love, indeed, is just one important department of the work of faith. The labour of love, then, it will be perceived, is the evidence alike of faith and of hope,—of the reality of the one, and the legitimacy of the other. It must consequently be the measure of both. Wherever, therefore, there is the assurance of faith, there will be the greatest degree of the labour of love;—but, the labour of love being the evidence of the legitimacy of hope, when there is the greatest degree of this evidence, there must be the greatest degree of the hope. If hope be proportioned to love, and love be propor-

* Gal. v. 6.

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tioned to faith, then must the two extremes be proportionals also, on the axiomatic principle, that things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another. There cannot, therefore, be the assurance of faith independently of the assurance of hope. Where there is the one, there must be the other.

To me it appears a misapprehension of the Apostle's meaning in Heb. vi. 11, "We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end;" when he is understood as holding forth this "*assurance of hope*" as the object of future and ultimate attainment by a certain course of preparatory diligence. The words are evidently capable of being addressed to persons who were at the time in the full enjoyment of it; the exhortation being designed to excite them to diligence in Christian duty, not in order to the *acquiring*, but to the *maintaining*, of the desired assurance.—I think I might go farther. The latter seems to be the only meaning of which the words are fairly susceptible. The expression "*unto the end*" fixes them to this interpretation. Had the exhortation been that they should "show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope," we might have regarded this assurance as a point which they had not yet attained, but which they were to strive to reach by the prescribed process of diligence in "the work and labour of love." But as it stands,—"that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope *unto the end*," this explanation will not do. Was it an object which they were to pursue "unto the end," and not to reach *till* the end? Assuredly not. And if not, what else can be the meaning, but that by the continuance and increase of their activity in duty, they were to retain, in growing stability, that assurance of which they were already in posses-

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sion? This accords with other expressions, which, in different words, convey a similar sentiment: such as chap. iii. 6, "But Christ, as a Son over his own house; whose house are we, if we *hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end*:"—and chap. iii. 14, "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we *hold the beginning of our confidence*" (that from which our confidence first arose, and that confidence itself arising from it) "*firm unto the end*." I should be disposed to call these parallel passages to the other; in which, after having assured them that God was not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love, which they had showed toward his name, he admonishes them to persist in the same course of holy devotedness and benevolent activity, that so they might enjoy unto the end a well-founded and animating confidence of the legitimacy of their hopes.

From all this it must be evident,—and the inference is one of practical importance,—that if we are desirous of enjoying the "full assurance *of hope*," our prayer should ever be, "Lord, increase our *faith*!"—faith being the spring of hope, and the germ of all those practical virtues of the Christian character, which are the active indications of the soul's spiritual life, of the possession of interest in Christ, and of the vital principles and divinely warranted hopes of life eternal.

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PROPOSITION VI.

THE SAME THINGS FROM WHICH THIS KNOWLEDGE IS SCRIPTURALLY DERIVED, SERVE TO ESTABLISH FAITH, AND TO KEEP BELIEVERS CLEAVING TO CHRIST.

This is obviously the meaning of the last clause of our text:—"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, *and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*" It were surely a waste of words, to prove that this, being addressed to persons who are described in the very verse as already believing, can signify nothing else than that their faith might be established,—that they might *continue* to believe,—that they might *hold fast*, and that with an increasingly resolute adherence, their faith in the name of the Son of God.

It was the Apostle's double purpose, at once to assure them that the testimony which they had received, and in which they stood, was indeed THE GOSPEL, in opposition to all the corruptions of it which were broached by false teachers, and by which their souls were in danger of being subverted; and at the same time, to lead them to such a personal experimental evidence of the truth, as should effectually fortify their minds against the plausibilities of anti-christian deceivers, and attach them to the "simplicity that is in Christ."—In the "things which he had written," he had given them directions how they were to distinguish between the doctrines of true and false pretenders to inspired authority; and he had pointed out to them the influence upon themselves, by which the true doctrine evinced itself to be from God,—the manner in which it "effectually wrought in them who believ-

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ed it:"—and he had given them his instructions on both these subjects, with the view that, by a right apprehension of the truth itself, by a due appreciation of the value of the blessings connected with it, and by a growing experience of its present saving and life-giving power, they might be established in their attachment to the Saviour, and determined on steadfast perseverance—that so they might prove themselves "not of them who go back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

It is not my purpose to enlarge on the illustration of this proposition; such extended illustration not being necessary to the more immediate object of the present Essay, which is already sufficiently long. A few general observations shall suffice.—In the very statement of the blessing,—a blessing of such incomprehensible fulness,—there is something both designed and calculated to produce a "cleaving with purpose of heart," to that Redeemer, through whom alone it can be obtained.—"ETERNAL LIFE!" What tongue can utter, what heart can comprehend, all that is included in this life!—the pardon of sin, and a state of favour and acceptance with God!—the restoration of divine life to the soul, in new, vital, holy principles of spiritual character!—and the well-founded, the divinely sanctioned, the all-animating hope of "glory, and honour, and immortality,"—of "fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore!"—If it be "life eternal" to "know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," shall we not value the knowledge, and be backward to part with it? Shall we not "take fast hold of it, and not let it go;" shall we not "keep it, since it is our life?" There was a time, early in the history of our Lord's ministry, when many who had professed themselves his disciples, offended by the representations which he

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gave of his person and of the purpose of his mission, "went back and walked no more with him." To try the attachment of the twelve, the more immediate attendants on his ministry, he put to them, with a look, we may conceive, of benignant and touching solicitude that searched their very souls, the question—"will ye also go away?" Peter, full of sincerity and ardour, and prompt to utter what his heart felt, answered, for himself and his fellow-apostles, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of ETERNAL LIFE: and we believe and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Thus, the very words that offended others confirmed the faith of Peter, and appear to have given him a juster apprehension of the character and work of Jesus, than any others on record that he heard from his lips:—and this was because he was under divine teaching, according to what Christ said to him on another occasion, when he made a similar confession—"Blessed art thou, Simon Barjonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven."—To know, then, that through Christ, and through Christ alone, they had "eternal life," could not but confirm the disciples to whom John wrote in their attachment to the faith. They would say, with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life!"

The greatness of a good to be obtained may sometimes have an imposing influence on the mind, inclining it to credulity, to be easy of persuasion, to catch at with eagerness, and to retain with tenacious fondness, what promises results so valuable. With regard to the blessings of the gospel, this natural tendency of the human mind is counteracted by a tendency not less natural, and, alas! not less powerful, the tendency to disrelish what is spiritual and holy. The eternal life which the gospel offers

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is of this description. If it were otherwise; if it consisted in mere deliverance from sorrows and sufferings, from physical evils, from the penal consequences of sin,—apart altogether from the implantation and exercise of spiritual principles and holy affections, and a state of heart to relish pure and heavenly joys, to delight in God, and in the hope of perfect likeness to him and communion with him in a sinless world;—the illusion referred to might operate in this as in other cases, and operate with a force corresponding to the superior greatness of the offered benefit. And in so far as salvation does consist in deliverance from the woes of earth and safety from the pains of hell, the illusion requires to be guarded against. But when with this is connected, as an equally essential part of the life revealed in the gospel, and bestowed by its gracious Author, the very character and state of heart just described—there is a counteraction to the danger; because, the very principle which enables us duly to estimate, and cordially to relish, spiritual blessings, is itself the life begun in the soul, of which the heavenly perfection is the object of Christian hope. We might naturally be credulous of a testimony, that offered us a full and eternal deliverance from all physical evils:—but we are naturally no less *in*credulous of a testimony, which announces its purpose to be the purifying of the heart, and which involves the requisition to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts;" which offers no deliverance from sufferings but in connexion with deliverance from sin, no happiness that is not indissolubly associated with holiness. Experience sadly and abundantly proves that the *incredulity* is incomparably the stronger of the two forces. And when we have really learned to estimate highly a life that consists of *such* blessings, we have, in the very fact of our

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having learned its value, an evidence of the possession of its principles.

If, in "knowing that we have eternal life," we have an enlightened and satisfying perception that the peace with God which we enjoy is a peace of which the ground is, at all points, in perfect harmony with the glory of the divine character, not abating one jot of the purity of his holiness, or the inflexibility of his justice, of the spiritual and comprehensive perfection of his law, or of the high and indispensable claims of his moral government,—but, on the contrary, "magnifying all, and making all honourable:"—if in "knowing that we have eternal life," we have experience in ourselves of new principles of holy living to which we were previously strangers,—new affections and desires, or rather, affections and desires after new objects, spiritual, heavenly, divine,—in the pursuit of which sin is mortified, and the world placed under our feet, and the grand end of our existence is felt to be "to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever:"—if, in "knowing that we have eternal life," we are resting our hope of the "life to come" on a foundation that bears to have the full blaze of the light of God thrown upon it, and to be "searched and tried" in that light; and feel at the same time, in ourselves, that this "life to come" is only the consummation of that which is already begun in us by the truth and Spirit of God,—that Spirit who is himself, in his saving influences, the earnest of the promised immortality of bliss,—and that such is the present happiness resulting from the principles of the spiritual life in our souls, as to make us sensible that we need nothing more than the sinless perfection of their exercise to render us thoroughly blessed:—if all this be necessarily included in our "knowing that we have eternal life,"—surely in all this there is evidence, substantial and satisfactory evidence, of

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the truth of the gospel; evidence by which our faith may receive additional and strong confirmation, without our incurring any just charge of enthusiasm. It is sound, rational, and conclusive.

In 1 John v. 10, it is said—"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."—It ought to be observed, that the word which, in this and the adjacent verses, is variously rendered *witness*, and *witnessed*, *testimony* and *testified*, and *record*, is in the original the same: so that verses 9—12 might be translated thus:—"If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater: for this is the testimony of God, which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the testimony in himself: he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the testimony that God hath testified of his Son. And this is the testimony, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."—I am far from proposing such a translation, as one at all admissible according to the idiomatic proprieties of our language; but mention it, merely to make the observation of some interpreters intelligible to the English reader. They allege that the words—"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the testimony in himself," mean simply that the believer has *the truth* or *doctrine* of God abiding in him. Now this is certainly true, and the same statement, in other terms, is frequent in the scriptures. This same apostle, for example, in a preceding part of the same epistle, says—"Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning: if that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father." Yet it is evident that John means by the expression, not the testimony considered simply in itself, but the testimony considered *as containing in it, and bringing*

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with it, evidence of its being from God. This is clear from verse 9. "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater;" where the point in comparison is not the thing testified, but the credit due to the testifier:—the import of the words being, not that *what is testified* by God is greater (although this is also true) than any thing testified by man; but that the credit due to God as a witness is greater than the credit due to man as a witness: that what He testifies ought to be received with infinitely more implicit confidence. When, therefore, in this connexion, it is added, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the testimony in himself," the meaning must be, not merely that he has *the truth testified* in his mind, abstractedly from every consideration of its origin and its evidence,—but that he has it there, *as the testimony of God, evincing itself in his own experience to be divine.* He has received it as divine; and he has it in himself as proved to be so. The testimony stands connected with the evidence of its original; and the apostle's expression evidently implies that the believer has *both in himself*,—the truth, associated with its evidence,—the truth, as its own witness. It dwells in him, with all its self-evidencing power. It "effectually worketh in him," approving itself, in his own consciousness, as "the power of God unto his salvation:"—and in this he has evidence of its divinity, such as no reasonings, however subtle, can shake, and of which no adversary, however powerful, can deprive him. In his soul and conscience he knows that "God is in that testimony of a truth." This divine and divinely authenticated testimony dwells in him:—and, while it is the fountain of his peace and joy, and the firm basis of his hopes, it is the principle of his progressive purity in heart, and obedient subjection in life. His experience establishes his faith. He "knows" by it "that he has

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eternal life;" and he "believes"—continues to believe—"on the Name of the Son of God."

APPLICATION.

There are many things which present themselves as suitable to be said, in closing such a subject. I cannot, however, enlarge; and the practical complexion of the latter parts of the discussion renders it the less necessary that I should. Amongst the readers of this little work, there may be, in greater or smaller proportions, three classes, to each of whom I may address a few parting words. They are the *confident*, the *diffident*, and the *careless*.

1. To the first of these classes I would say—I have no objections to confidence. The Bible speaks of it as the believer's privilege. I have no objection to its rising to assurance, to full assurance,—to its even assuming this form at the very outset, and maintaining it to the end of the course; inasmuch as we have seen it to be the gracious design of God that his people should "know that they have eternal life;"—and the case is quite conceivable,—nay more, whatever there may be in believers themselves to hinder its being uniformly realized, there is not only nothing in the word of God to prevent it, but every thing to warrant and produce it,—of so clear and simple a perception, and so strong and steadfast a belief, being obtained from the very first, and continued ever afterwards, of the freeness and fulness of the grace of God in Christ, as shall keep the believer in the scriptural enjoyment of unshaken confidence to the last. It is not the fault of God or of his gospel, that it is not always thus. It is in neither that we are straightened, but in ourselves.—It will be well for the confident, however, to attend to the three following simple inquiries.

First. Are you sure your confidence is resting on the true foundation,—on the genuine apostolic gos-

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pel,—the simple testimony of God concerning his Son?—on the finished work of Jesus, held forth in that testimony as the divinely approved and therefore only ground of acceptance for sinners? Many, you must be well aware, have had confidence in error. See then that your foundation be right. This is the first concern. If this be wrong, all is wrong. Examine well the divine record, which reveals the ground of hope with all simplicity, requiring only simplicity on the sinner's part to understand it; and see that your confidence be founded in THE TRUTH.

Secondly. Supposing your conceptions of the gospel to be according to the simplicity of apostolic statement, let me ask you—Is your confidence *humble?* You may fancy it hardly necessary to ask such a question, after you have said that your confidence rests exclusively on the finished work of the Just One. Be it so. All I wish you to remember is, that if it really do rest there, it *will* be humble; and that the humble-minded character of your confidence is one of the evidences that this is indeed its foundation. But I have known persons, who have evidently prided themselves in their simple views of the truth; who have made a righteousness of their clear notions; who, instead of living in a habitually lowly dependence on what the truth reveals, have plumed themselves on their emancipation from the enthralling mysticism of human systems, and have looked down, with a cold-hearted superciliousness, on all who, in their statements of the gospel, have not come fully up to their standard. Yes: I have known such persons;—pharisaical foes of pharisaism; uttering, in the spirit of the pharisee, the language of the publican; humbling themselves in words, with a conscious self-elation at their humbling themselves so well; professing to trust exclusively in the righteousness of

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Christ, but secretly, and unavowedly to themselves, confiding in their very zeal for the exclusion of their own; in one word, "trusting in themselves that they are *right* and despising others,"—a description of character within a syllable of the pharisee's in expression, and quite as little remote from it in principle and state of mind. Those who have been taught by the grace of God to build their hopes on the work of Christ alone, had need to be on their guard against the encroachment of such a spirit. If the confidence they enjoy be genuine, they will, I repeat, hold it, *humbly;* with a deep and self-abasing consciousness that they owe their simple and cheering views of the gospel not to themselves but to the Spirit of God, that they are debtors for every thing to sovereign mercy; and with a melting tenderness of compassion and of prayer for all who are building on any other foundation,—who are betaking themselves to any refuges of lies,—or who, from the want, whencesoever arising, of a clear apprehension of the simplicity of the gospel, are involved in the gloom of despondency, and "go mourning without the sun." The assurance which allows its possessor to glory over such, is destitute of one of the most essential characteristics of scriptural confidence; it wants humility.

Thirdly. I ask you, is your confidence a *holy* confidence? I mean, is it a confidence in union with practical religion? Is it associated with "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly?"—with "cleansing yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God?" If it be not; if it be connected with sin and worldliness:—although not, it may be, with the open indulgence of vice, yet with conformity to the world in its vanities and follies, its gayeties and thoughtless pleasures; as if you thought religion, instead

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of consisting in the spiritual and holy influence of those divine truths, of which the faith is intended "to deliver you from this present evil world," lay in the mere holding of a speculative opinion, the adoption of which brought with it the privilege of worldly indulgence;—if such be the character of your confidence, such its earthly and secular associations and tendencies, you may call it by the scriptural designation of "the assurance of faith," but I say again, it is the assurance of presumption. The whole word of God disowns it. It is not a plant of grace, but a weed of corruption. It is not from heaven, but from hell; not from the Spirit of light, but from the Prince of darkness. Jesus "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:"—"gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

2. To the second class of persons, the *diffident*, I would say: let it be well considered, whence your want of confidence arises. So far from disapproving of diffidence, when considered as meaning self-distrust or self-jealousy, I would apply to it the words of Solomon—"Blessed is the man that feareth always."—But there is a desponding diffidence, which wonders at the cheerful confidence of others, while it is itself the offspring of obscure conceptions, or unbelieving suspicions, of the freeness and fulness of gospel grace. You may be looking too much to yourselves, and too little to Christ.—It would be unseasonable to enter largely into this interesting field; nor do I feel myself at liberty to do so, having recently gone into it at considerable length in another publication.* But a little I must say. Let

* Sermons. The reference is especially to those on 1 John iv. 18. "Perfect love casteth out fear."

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me remind my desponding readers, then, that the gospel is the "gospel of peace;" that it is "good tidings of great joy;" and that the communication of peace and joy must therefore be one of the very purposes of its proclamation to sinners. Why should good news be sent us, but to make us happy? There is no presumption, then, you must at once perceive, in a sinner's peace, when it is "peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ:"—there is no presumption in a sinner's joy, when he "rejoices in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh," —when he "joys in God, through Jesus Christ, by whom he has received the reconciliation." The possession of such peace and joy is no more than the fulfilment of the very end of God in the mission and work of his Son. And how is it to be retained? I answer, by steadfast "looking unto Jesus." This is the only legitimate, and it is, in the nature of things, the only reasonable way to find and to keep it. When the mariner is overtaken by the perilous tempest, what imparts to his mind confidence and tranquillity? Does he look forth at the fury of the raving storm, and, in order to enjoy peace and a sense of security, set himself to examine the state of his own feelings about it? No. He examines the tightness of his vessel, the firmness of its timbers, the completeness of its tackling, and its seaworthy structure: he calls to mind the storms it has already weathered, the fearful seas which it has come through in safety. And how does the landsman quiet his fears, when he feels his dwelling tremble before the beating blast? To listen to the roaring of the wind, and brood over his own feelings, would only sink his spirit the more. He thinks of the rock on which his house is founded, and looks at the thickness, and strength, and tried stability of its massy walls. Thus should we do. We must find our peace and security and joy, in surveying

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the sufficiency of the foundation on which our hopes are built,—not shifting sand, but solid rock,—the foundation of which Jehovah himself hath said—"Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; and he that believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

You will tell me, perhaps, that your affections are not as they ought to be:—they are so cold, so dead, so inadequate to the extent of your obligations and the merits and claims of their object,—and altogether you are conscious of such failures, that—how *can* you have peace?—To those, then, who speak thus (and many such there are) I would say, not in scorn, but with all affection:

First: Remember, that the exercise of your affections towards Christ is not to be your justifying righteousness;—no, nor any part of it. It is not to be, in any degree whatever, the ground of your hope towards God. It is HE who is the *object* of your faith and love that constitutes that ground, even CHRIST HIMSELF, in his perfect righteousness and atoning blood.—See, then, that you keep these things distinct; for many have, perhaps unconsciously, confounded them, and, by confounding them, have been "led into darkness and not into light."

Secondly: Although love to Christ is the effect and evidence of faith, so that there is no faith where there is no love,—I hope you never will come to think of yourselves, that you love him *sufficiently;* with a love at all adequate to his deserts, or to your own obligations:—for while you live on earth, this will never be true; and even in heaven itself, although your heart shall be as full of love as it can hold, yet, when measured by the deserts of its object, even such love will ever be far beneath them; for these deserts are infinite, and the love which would be a suitable return for them would require

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to be exercised by an infinite mind:—a created soul, however enlarged and however holy, can never contain it.—I trust, moreover, that you will never cease to fear lest your love should cool, exposed as it is, in this world, to so many refrigeratory influences. The very fear of not loving arises from love, and from an impression of the high claims of its object; and this description of self-jealousy is included in the saying before cited, "Blessed is the man that feareth always."

Thirdly: How is it that the affections are to be excited, and maintained in lively exercise, towards their objects?—How are they elevated and invigorated towards an earthly object? Is it by sitting down to muse on how you have felt in former times, or how you are feeling now? No; it is by thinking of your friend; by recollecting in your own mind, and recounting to others, his various excellencies—every thing in him and about him, that is fitted to attract, and fix, and strengthen attachment. So should it be in regard to your heavenly friend. It is not by brooding over the state of your own minds and hearts, that your love to Him is to be confirmed and animated:—it is by "looking unto Jesus"—by thinking of him, reading of him, speaking of him, praising him; by dwelling on *his* love to *you*, rather than on *yours* to *him*; and above all, let me say, by actively serving him, in all the duties of life. Your great error lies in making happy frames and feelings too much your *object* or *aim*. But "I am well persuaded, that, speaking generally, they will be found to enjoy such frames most habitually, who think least about them. The true way to the possession of them is, not setting them up before us as the object to which our endeavours are to be directed, but living a life of operative faith upon the Son of God, resting with firmness and simplicity on his finished work and

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under the influence of humble gratitude and love to his name, constantly and diligently doing his will, and promoting his glory?" Follow this course, and "the joy of the Lord will be your strength." If you court assurance, and follow after comfortable frames, as the object of direct pursuit, doing what you can to produce them in your minds, you are not likely to find them. But "look unto Jesus"—not in the way of mere indolent contemplation, but as the ground of your hopes, the source of your happiness, your motive to active duty, and your example in the performance of it; and they will come spontaneously.

Fourthly: All our self-inquiry, if conducted on right principles, will *lead us to Jesus.* When you bring yourselves to the test of God's law, and perceive and feel that, when tried by that standard, there is nothing for you but despair, what should be the effect, but to "shut you up" the more to Him, as your only refuge, and your only hope?—And when you try yourselves by the Bible description of the Christian character, and are still conscious (as who is not?) of sad and multiplied deficiencies; let this operate in two ways:—let it deepen still farther your humble impression of your need of his propitiatory blood and abounding mercy; convincing you that even the character of the renewed nature, in any stage of its advancement, will never do for you to stand in before God:—and let it impart to your minds a still livelier sense of the value of his name, as your plea at the throne of grace, for that divine influence which is needful, to enlighten what is dark, to supply what is wanting, to correct what is erroneous, to purify what is corrupt, to spiritualize what is earthly, to elevate what is depressed, to invigorate what is weak, to confirm what is unstable, to keep you from temptation, and to deliver you from evil. And as to your experience

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—what is the use you should make of it? Are you to trust in it? No; but only to draw from it encouragement to return to the source from which it was derived. If it was legitimate and scriptural, that source was Christ. The Holy Spirit makes CHRIST the spring of all that he acknowledges as Christian experience; and then, keeping the believing soul still to one point, makes that experience the attraction back to Christ.

3. There may be some, who, prompted by curiosity, or by various other motives, may read these pages, that are *careless* about their own interest in the important matters discussed in them. I call them important. Who will dispute it? Their importance is unutterable. Yet, while every sound judgment assents to this; alas! with what listlessness they are generally regarded! Men hear, and sometimes read, discussions about eternal life, as if it were a matter in which they had no personal concern—a mere theme for disputatious theologians, and Sunday declaimers. What is said about it is often listened to with incomparably less interest than is discovered respecting any of the trivial every-day concerns of this world's accommodation. But let me beseech you, my careless reader, with affectionate solicitude, not officially, but as a friend, to recollect the solemn fact, a fact which you can neither gainsay nor alter, that you *are* in possession of an existence that is never to end; and that the present life is the time for settling the question, whether this eternal existence is to be to you an eternity of happiness or of woe! The very *possibility* of this alternative depending on your present transitory and precarious life, should make you serious, and in earnest. Yet, are you not attending to, and settling, every day, questions of this world's personal, domestic, commercial, and political economy, while you are leaving uninvestigated and unde-

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cided inquiries relative to that never-ending state on which every instant you know not but you may enter? To-morrow itself, on which you are reckoning as a part of your present life, may to you be a part, not of time, but of eternity—a fixed and immutable eternity! Are you, then, acting wisely? —are you acting consistently with that *reason*, which is your boasted distinction from the brute creation?—Yet, while living thus, you may be professing to believe the Bible to be God's word. Surely you cannot be in earnest. It must be profession only. If you really believed it to be from God, you never could trifle as you do with its contents. To profess this belief, and thus to trifle, is, you must be sensible, the most open and flagrant insult to its divine Author; an insult, such as you yourselves would not bear from a fellow creature. And if you really knew and believed the contents of this divine record, you could not remain as you are, careless about the eternal results which it brings before you, and of which it assures you with such equal fidelity of denunciation and promise. The question, who have, and who have not eternal life, is a question decided in this book with the most unwavering explicitness. There is no dubiety left hanging over it:—"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand: he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him:" "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." These declarations stand on record in this book. You cannot be wise in treating them with lightness, till you have carefully examined, and deliberately set aside, as proved to be futile, all the evidence of its divine original. They are interest-

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ing to all;—they are interesting to you. Be not satisfied even with attending to a discussion such as that to which this little treatise relates, and giving a speculative decision on one side or other of the argument. Bring the question, the all-important question, home, HAVE I ETERNAL LIFE? That you should *have* this life is to you of infinite and everlasting moment:—that you should *know* that you have it, is of as great consequence to your true happiness in time, as the other is to your blessedness in eternity. May God in mercy lead you to both the possession and the knowledge, by leading you to Christ!

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ESSAY II.

ON THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT, AND UNIVERSAL PARDON.

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ESSAY II.

ON THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT, AND UNIVERSAL PARDON.

THE forgiveness of sins, which I consider as the leading and introductory blessing of all that are included in salvation, is one whose general nature there can be no difficulty to understand. It is the full and everlasting remission of guilt; that is, such a pardon as cancels its entire amount, leaving no charge standing to the account of the sinner,—and such a pardon, as shall never be recalled, so as to leave him again exposed to condemnation.—These two attributes of *fulness* and *perpetuity* are essential to its real value.

First—Fulness. When Jehovah pardons, he pardons not partially, but completely. The act of indemnity includes transgressions of all descriptions and of all degrees,—degrees both of intrinsic turpitude and of circumstantial aggravation. His pardoning mercy

> "Blots out all past offences quite,
> Nor bears one fault in mind."

Its language is—"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Who is a God," says the prophet, "like unto thee, who pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again; he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast

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ALL their sins into the depths of the sea."* The completeness of the pardon is necessary, to render it of any real worth. It is true, indeed, that even partial forgiveness we must conceive to mitigate punishment, and therefore to be so far a benefit; since it cannot be, that a smaller measure of guilt should infer the same condemnation as a greater. But oh! when we think of the intrinsic enormity of every sin, considered as a violation of supreme authority, a base requital of infinite goodness, a hateful offence against unspotted purity, and a daring defiance of omnipotent vengeance,—when we think what every sin deserves, as comprehending in it all these elements of evil,—we feel that a partial forgiveness will not suffice. If any of our trespasses were to be left standing against us in the records of divine justice, we must perish; and perdition, even in its lowest measures, will not be lightly estimated by any justly reflecting mind. But it is our happiness, that the forgiveness revealed by the gospel is full forgiveness. It cancels all. It erases every trespass. It puts into the lips of the happy recipient of the blessing the triumphant challenge, "Who shall lay ANY THING to the charge of God's elect?"

Secondly. And not less important and essential is its *perpetuity.* This attribute of divine forgiveness is finely expressed in the terms of New Covenant promise—"I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I *remember no more.*"†—I need hardly observe, that this is not to be understood literally. No: the divine omniscience includes in it a perfect unerring remembrance of all the past. It is one of the wonders of Deity, every attempt to conceive of which baffles

* Micah vii. 18, 19. † Heb. viii. 12.

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and overwhelms us, that he FORGETS NOTHING! Each of us finds it impossible to retain any thing like an accurate recollection of his own thoughts, and words, and actions, for even a single day. But to the infinite mind there is present the history of every individual of all the millions of the world's population for nearly six thousand years,—a history comprehending in each case, all that has been thought, or felt, or said, or done by him, every moment of his life,—and that too in perfect order and circumstantial accuracy, without the slightest intermixture or confusion! Well may we exclaim, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it!" But so it must be:—else we might ask the question, and be unable to give it a satisfactory answer, "How shall God judge the world?"—The divine Being's "*not remembering*" is only a strong expression for his never recalling, as grounds of judicial charge and sentence, the sins which he has pardoned. "His gifts and calling are," in this as in other respects, "without repentance." His assurance to all whom he forgives is, "I have *blotted out* as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins."

This property of perpetuity is also essential to the value of the blessing, and to the satisfaction and peace of those who enjoy it. How heartless, how distracting would be the most distant surmise, that, notwithstanding the present forgiveness, the time might hereafter come, when God should change his mind, should recede from the engagements of his covenant, should bring our sins again to remembrance, should reverse the sentence from pardon to condemnation, from mercy to wrath! But thus it *shall* not—thus it *cannot* be. The forgiveness is that of an unchanging God. He "resteth in his love." He keeps sacred his promise. The act of pardon is written on indestructible materials, which

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the fires of a burning world shall not consume. The sentence of condemnation has been cancelled with blood, which no chemistry can ever discharge.—"There is therefore now NO CONDEMNATION to them who are in Christ Jesus."

I have said, that the sentence of condemnation has been cancelled with blood. This leads me to notice, very briefly, the *ground* of forgiveness.—Nothing can be revealed with greater plainness and explicitness than this. It is the ATONEMENT OF CHRIST. The blessing, indeed, is represented, sometimes more generally as being in or through Christ, and sometimes more specifically as in or through his blood. The sentiment is of frequent occurrence in both forms. In the first or more general form, it occurs in such texts as these:—"Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that *through this man* is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:"* "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved:"† "To wit, that God was *in* (or *by*) *Christ* reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."‡ Of the latter or more specific form, the following are instances:—"Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith *in his blood*."§ "In whom" ("the Beloved,") "we have redemption *through his blood*, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace:"‖—"The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin:"¶—"It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the hea-

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* Acts xii. 38. † Acts iv. 12. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 19.
§ Rom. iii. 24, 25. ‖ Eph. i. 7. ¶ 1 John i. 7.

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verily things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; (for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world;) but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;"* "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure: Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. Above, when he said, Sacrifice, and offering, and burnt-offerings, and offering for sin, thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein; (which are offered by the law;) Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God."†

The plain meaning of these and many similar passages is, that sin is forgiven to men on the ground of the atonement of Christ. There is no making any thing else of them, nor of the general strain of the scriptures on the same subject, but by a pro-

* Heb ix. 23—26. † Heb. x. 4—12.

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cess of torturing criticism, before which no terms, in any language, however select and explicit, could possibly stand.—It is of great importance, however, that we have right conceptions of the nature and design of atonement. It has by its adversaries been slanderously misrepresented, and by still more, perhaps, it has been thoughtlessly misunderstood,—as if by means of it some change had been effected in the divine character, as if love had been produced towards sinners in the bosom of Deity; love which had not been there before,—merciful kindness taking the place of wrathful vindictiveness. But every idea of change in God is blasphemous. There can be no new principle introduced into his character. It is immutably the same,—"without variableness or shadow of turning." It has been from eternity what it is now; and what it is now it shall to eternity continue. The atonement has no regard to the *production* of love, but simply to the *mode of its expression*. It is not the cause, but the effect of love; not its origin, but its manifestation. This is the light in which the Scriptures clearly place it:—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life:"—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins:"—"When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*

They, however, appear to be also in error, who conceive of the atonement as solely and simply an

* John iii. 16. 1 John iv. 10. Rom. v. 6—8.

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exhibition of love. That love is displayed in it,—a love which "in height and depth, and breadth and length, passeth knowledge,"—infinite love,—is a delightful truth. It is displayed both in the providing of a propitiation at all, and still more in the wonderful nature of the propitiation provided. But, notwithstanding this, the proper and immediate reference of propitiation is not to love, but to righteousness. A substitute is provided for the guilty; a sufficient and voluntary substitute:—their sins are laid upon him:—he suffers for them in their room. In the voluntary substitution and sufferings of the Mediator, there is given such a manifestation of the divine righteousness, as effectually secures it from all reflection, and maintains the full honour of its unimpeachable purity, in the forgiveness of sin. An atonement, then, is such a manifestation of holy righteousness, as to make way for the free and honourable exercise of mercy. This is clearly the sentiment of that striking passage on the subject, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his grace; through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."*

There are many topics here which press forward for notice, but which we must of necessity set aside; especially respecting the nature of the divine justice, and the particular views of it to which atonement ought to be considered as having more immediate reference. I must waive these discussions,

* Rom. iii. 23—26.

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lest I should, to too great an extent, be chargeable with repeating what I have largely stated in another publication.*—I have stated the general principle of atonement, as being a vindicatory manifestation of the righteousness of God, in order to the free and honourable exercise of his mercy.—In this view, I have no hesitation whatever in holding forth the atonement which has actually been made, and which is revealed in the gospel, as of unlimited sufficiency for all, and as bringing salvation near to all, presenting its blessings for their immediate acceptance. All may not be included in the secret purpose of God as to its ultimate efficaciousness. That is another matter. With such secret purposes we have nothing whatever to do, in addressing to sinners the calls and invitations of the gospel. The atonement is *for all* in its unbounded sufficiency, and in the unrestricted universality of the invitations and offers which, on the ground of this sufficiency, the message of mercy addresses to every sinner on the face of the earth to whose ear it comes. Such is my impression of its sufficiency, that were all the guilt of all the millions of mankind that have ever lived concentrated in my own person, I should see no reason, relying on that blood which "cleanseth from all sin," to indulge despair.—I profess myself decidedly hostile to every limitation of the atonement in this view—that is, either with regard to its sufficiency for all, or with regard to the warrant which all have, on the ground of it, to look for forgiveness and salvation. I have ever entertained an irreconcilable aversion to the views of those expositors, who speak of the atonement as being *for*

* Fourth Edition of Discourses on the Principal Points of the Socinian Controversy. I refer to this Edition, on account of the enlargements it contains on the particular topics alluded to in the text.

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the elect in such a sense, as to have been an *exact equivalent* for the punishment due to the sins of the chosen number, and no more; so that if more had been to be saved, more must have been suffered by the Substitute, and if fewer, less. My objections to this view of the doctrine are such as these:

1. It appears to me utterly irreconcilable with any correct and consistent views of the *infinite worth of the Redeemer's sacrifice.*—The union of the Divine and human natures imparted to it this infinite worth; infinite, because divine. But every system which proceeds upon the principle of its rising or falling in its amount of value, according as the substitute suffers for more or for fewer—for a larger or a smaller aggregate of guilt—is altogether at variance with this.—That cannot be unlimited in value, which is capable of increase or diminution.

2. If this pitiful process of commercial reckoning were admitted,—then the perdition or eternal sufferings of all mankind would have been a greater manifestation of the divine righteousness and abhorrence of sin, than the sufferings of the Son of God. For, it is evident, more would have been endured: and if the display of justice is to be calculated upon this principle,—to be estimated by the amount of actual suffering,—how can the inference be evaded? It will not repel it to remind me that Jesus was a divine person. It is most true. But it is also true, that if this consideration is taken into the account, it makes the value of his sacrifice unlimited, and therefore proves too much for the hypothesis of exact equivalent; a hypothesis, of which the principle is, a limited amount of suffering for a limited amount of sin; so that, in truth, the only intelligible use of the connexion of the divine nature with the human, must have been, to enable the human to sustain the allotted quantum of suffering.

3. The hypothesis renders the salvation of any

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besides the elect a *natural impossibility*. We are accustomed to say, and we say truly and scripturally, to sinners of mankind, that if they are not saved, the fault is entirely their own, lying solely in their own unwillingness to have the salvation offered them, or to accept it on the terms on which it is presented. But on the supposition of limitation in the atonement, this is not the case. There is, indeed, indisposition on their part; and it is their sin. But if the atonement be limited in its sufficiency, it is, in the nature of the thing, absurd and contradictory so much as to imagine any, beyond the number to the amount of whose sins it is restricted, deriving any benefit from it. To call on any others to believe in Christ for salvation, is to call them, in as far as they are concerned, to believe in a nonentity. There would be nothing in the Saviour for them. They are excluded by the limitation of the remedy. For them to seek salvation would be to seek an impossibility. Were they ever so desirous of it, they could not obtain it; for the impossibility would, in this case, arise, not from their own impotence,—(their moral impotence, which is the same thing as their proud and unholy aversion, and constitutes their guilt,)—but from the very nature and constitution of the plan of redemption. If the atonement made has been equivalent to only a limited amount of sin, and if atonement be necessary to forgiveness,—then beyond the limited amount, no sin can possibly be forgiven. There is no provision for it.

4. This being the case, it will be difficult, on such a hypothesis, to vindicate, in any way, the sincerity of those divine addresses by which sinners universally are called upon to believe and be saved. If there do not exist, in the atonement or propitiation made, what has appropriately been termed an *objective sufficiency* for all—there really exists no

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ground on which sinners in general can be invited to trust. Such invitation becomes no better than a tantalizing of perishing creatures, with the offer of what has no existence. There is nothing which it is, in the nature of the thing, possible for them to receive, unless a new atonement were to be made. There is no fund from which their debts can be paid. They are invited to a feast; but there is no provision made for them. They are called to the wells of salvation; but to them they are "wells without water." An ALL-SUFFICIENT SAVIOUR becomes, in addressing sinners indiscriminately, a designation destitute of truth, a mere "great swelling word of vanity."

5. The hypothesis, in the view which it gives of the substitution and work of Christ, takes nothing into the account but the *desert of the sinner*. It balances a certain proportion of deserved punishment on the part of the transgressor, by a corresponding proportion of vicarious suffering on the part of the atoning substitute,—a proportion, which increases or diminishes, according to the number of sinners, and consequently according to the number and the magnitude of sins, for which the substitute endures it. It appears to be entirely forgotten, that there is another party,—a party, whose claims are infinitely superior in importance to any interests of the sinning creature;—it appears to be forgotten, that the glory of God, violated by transgression, requires to be secured, and vindicated, and displayed, irrespectively of the mere numerical amount of sinners and of sins;—that this was, in truth, the great end of substitution and atonement;—and that the question is not one of commutative or commercial justice,—what measure of suffering must be undergone, as an equivalent for the measure of sin to be forgiven,—how many drops of expiatory blood for so many trespasses to be remitted;—that it has no

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such principle in it of wretched mercantile calculation; that the chief part of it is, what was necessary to give such a manifestation of the united glories of the truth and love, the righteousness and mercy, of Jehovah, as that the honour of his character and government might be fully secured in forgiving and saving sinners?

I might, perhaps, have added with truth, that regarding the atonement as proceeding on the principle of commutative or commercial justice, or of the strict and proper payment of debt, can hardly be considered as leaving room for the subsequent exercise of grace, whatever there might be in its original appointment; inasmuch as the payment of a debt by a surety leaves no more claim, on the part of the creditor, than if it had been discharged by the debtor himself. The parallel, indeed, between the relation of a debtor to his creditor and that of a sinner to God, has, in this respect as well as in some others, been pressed too closely.—Forgiveness, according to the uniform statements of the word of God, is connected with atonement. But atonement and grace are not, by any means, incompatible.—Many things, indeed, have been said about it, which were they true, would go far, whether those who say them be sensible of it or not, to destroy the gracious nature of the pardon bestowed on account of it. I have no objections, for example, to the customary phrase of *divine justice being satisfied* by the atonement; but still, the phrase requires to be scripturally explained. I fear there are not a few who, when they use this phrase, have in their minds too much of the principle of that particular kind of justice to which I have just alluded;—who regard the justice of God in the light of a rigid and inexorable creditor, demanding to the uttermost farthing the payment of what is due to him; and consider the atonement as, literally and strictly, such a pay-

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ment of debt on our behalf. They are not aware that by such a representation they do, in a great measure, exclude grace. For, on the principles of commercial justice, although there may be grace on the part of the Surety who comes forward to pay the debt, grace proportioned to its amount,—yet on the part of the creditor to whom the payment is made, there is and can be none. The act of payment, by whomsoever made, whether by the debtor himself or by his surety, cancels the obligation, and puts an end to grace.

But the view which we have, very generally and briefly, been giving of the nature and ends of the atonement, leaves room for grace throughout. It has its origin in grace; and grace continues to characterize all its results.—It had its origin in grace. The idea of divine favour being *purchased* by the atonement is not only, as we have seen, inconsistent with right conceptions of divine character, but it is in itself contradictory. Grace or favour cannot be purchased. Purchased favour,—favour for which a price has been paid, becomes justice. And while it is inconsistent with itself, it is, as might be anticipated, inconsistent with the plainest dictates of Holy Writ. There, as already noticed, the atonement appears, not originating love, but originated by it; "God *so loving* the world, *as to give* his Son for its salvation." The atonement does not purchase grace; but grace provides the atonement. And it provides the atonement for the end before stated,—namely, to render the farther exercises of grace, in receiving, pardoning, sanctifying, and eternally blessing sinners, consistent with the honour of the divine Name, with the glory of Jehovah's character and government. This being its design, grace continues to characterize all its results. Forgiveness, though on account of the atonement, is still by grace. In Paul's mind the

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two ideas of atonement and grace subsisted, without the slightest feeling of incongruity. "In whom," says he,—that is in Christ, "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace:" and again—"Being justified freely, by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood."* Nor *is* there any incongruity. Fancy to yourselves a band of traitors, apprehended, convicted, condemned, lying in irons under the sentence which their crimes have deserved. Suppose their prince, naturally benignant, desirous to extend mercy to them; but at the same time, wise and righteous and mindful of the interests of the community, as well as benignant, solicitous to effect this in such a way as may at once secure the dignity and authority of his government, attach the hearts of the criminals to its administration and to himself, and impress all his subjects with the conviction that the remission of the penalty in the particular case implies no relaxation of the rigour of the law and the stability of its sanctions. Suppose that, in such circumstances, he should contrive some method by which these ends might be effectually answered; and that, having completed his scheme, and publicly announced its purpose, he should give his clemency its desired indulgence:—would the pardon now be less a matter of free favour, or grace, to the delinquents? Clearly not. The scheme does not render them one whit more deserving of it. It does not lessen their guilt: it rather shows its magnitude, by declaring it such as could not be passed by without some precautionary means for securing the honour of the prince and the respect due to his go-

* Eph. i. 7. Rom. v. 24, 25.

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vernment; nay, it aggravates instead of extenuating, by showing the character of the prince and government against which the rebels had risen up, not a ruthless tyrant and an oppressive despotism, but a paternal ruler and an administration of equity and love. The pardon is to them, therefore, as much an act of mercy as ever:—and the character of the prince stands forth to more prominent view and to more rapturous admiration, as adorned with the twofold excellence, of a gracious solicitude to show mercy, and at the same time a decided attachment to righteousness, and a determination, for the good of his subjects, that its claims shall not be trifled with, but shall be maintained inviolate. In like manner, the divine Ruler's adopting a plan for maintaining the honour of *his* character and government in the dispensation of forgiveness does not, in the least degree, render that forgiveness less a matter of pure grace to those who receive it. And while it is pure grace, it is also rich:—rich indeed! that provided such an atonement!—and rich indeed! which, on the ground of the atonement so provided, blots out, to every sinner who partakes of it, so vast an amount of evil, and yet embraces among its favoured objects a multitude which no man can number, out of all kindreds, and peoples, and nations, and tongues!

This naturally leads me to the topic, which it is the chief object of the present Essay to discuss; namely—THE PERSONS BY WHOM FORGIVENESS IS POSSESSED. A scheme of doctrine has recently been advanced, (if a scheme it can as yet be called "which shape has none,") and has been patronized by individuals of name and influence, for some of whom I cannot but still entertain a warm regard, and has gained a certain degree of acceptance and currency; of which one of the first principles is, that *pardon is universal;* universal, that is, not merely in free

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offer, but in actual possession; that the atonement has availed for the sins of all mankind, collectively and individually, so that all without exception are actually in a state of forgiveness; that the atonement, in a word, *is* the *pardon*, and that, the one being universal, so is the other. There are various collateral points in the scheme, which might warrant and require distinct exposure. But I confine myself at present to what I have just mentioned, as being, I may say, its fundamental principle. If it be disproved, others will fall with it. If the foundation be sapped,—I was going to say we need give ourselves little trouble about the pinnacles:—but the builders are not yet come near to the pinnacles;—the irregular edifice is not half reared:—let me rather say, the baseless superstructure, so far as it has been raised, will come to the ground.

On the present subject, as on every other of a religious nature, our exclusive appeal must be made to the word of God. This is the only legitimate way of determining the question. It is not to be settled by any process of abstract reasoning, however speciously such a process may be conducted. It is not to be resolved by human ratiocination, but by divine authority. And if abstract reasoning must be set aside; still less satisfactory, as a rule of decision, are the emotions, however lively, or however serious and devout, of which individuals may profess themselves conscious from the adoption of particular views of doctrine, there being few things in which the mind is more exposed to self-illusion, and yet few things by the relation of which hearts of spiritual sensibility are more in danger of being captivated and misled. And least of all, should we allow ourselves to be influenced by any theoretical notion of rendering the gospel less obnoxious to unbelievers, abating men's prejudices against it, and recommending it to a more ready acceptance.—

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None of these methods will do for deciding a point of divine truth; yet on the subject before us there has been too much of them all. There has been abstract reasoning as to what seems most befitting the character of Deity,—especially the love in which that character is at times summed up; and on this view of the case, many sentiments have been introduced, in the way of illustration, distinguished both by their loftiness and their beauty, and invested with a charm of pure and fervent devotion, peculiarly fascinating to minds at all predisposed to what is spiritual, and from which others too may derive the benefit of an awakening impulse; sentiments, such as may fill the believer's eye, in the reading of them, with the tear of sympathetic delight, and draw from his very heart the sigh of regret that they should be associated with any misapprehensions of the truth.—There has been much too of appeal to feeling. The abetters of the particular views which we are about to discuss, tell all with whom they converse, of the wonderful effect of their new principles in inspiring and expanding their hearts with love,—love to God, such as they never before experienced, and which they are sure no other views of the truth have ever produced; and there appears at times so much of sincerity and earnestness in their representations, accompanied with a desire so seemingly or really benevolent (for there may not infrequently be an alloy of less noble feelings) to bring others to the happy participation of the same experience; that the passions of some are wrought upon, and by that means their judgments misled into a too hasty acquiescence.—And there has, moreover, been not a little of a fond and eager pressing of the novel views upon the attention of unbelievers, as being calculated to diminish the prejudices of the natural mind against the gospel, and, by taking off from its obnoxiousness, and ren-

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dering it less repulsive and stern than the more common exhibitions of it are conceived to be, to persuade to its acceptance. But this, to say the least of it, is a very hazardous experiment. There is imminent danger of devesting the gospel of some attribute as essential to it as its grace, in order to lessen the aversion of the carnal mind to its provisions; and, by a soft and specious sentimentalism, stripping the Almighty of the awful in his character, to give effect to the more attractive; hiding his justice, to recommend his grace; instead of employing the "terrors of the Lord" to persuade men, keeping them out of sight; dwelling much on the love, and little on the light, of God's moral nature; and by—I know not what to call it—a kind of ultra tenderness, that would fain be more compassionate than He whose compassions are infinite—urging and almost cajoling poor sinners to the belief that God has already pardoned them, when the Bible testimony is, that "God is angry with them every day."—But I am forgetting myself, and prejudging the cause. All that I meant to say is, that no one of the methods that have been mentioned is the proper way to settle a point of divine truth. The simple question must be, What saith the Scripture? And for an answer to the question, our appeal must be made directly "to the law and to the testimony:" remembering that "if we speak not according to this word, there is no light in us." In making our appeal, our prayer should be earnest for the grace of God, to preserve us from warping from its true and simple meaning a single passage, a single expression, a single word,—from being guilty, in any way or in any degree, under the influence of either attachment to what is old or predilection for what is new, of "handling the word of God deceitfully," and giving, to any thing that is not the truth, the sanction of divine authority.

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§ 1. Let our first object, then, be, to ascertain the real extent of the doctrine of universal forgiveness. There may be no argument in merely seeing how far the doctrine reaches; but, whether there be or not, (and there sometimes is,) it is at least of use to have a correct conception of what we are to argue about.—It will not be questioned, that the atonement of Christ had a retrospective efficacy as well as a prospective. I mean, that it was for the remission of sins committed previously as well as subsequently to the fulness of time, the time when it was offered, embracing all the ages that preceded, as well as those that have followed. Sin was forgiven before as well as after; and from the beginning, the forgiveness was on the same ground,—the atonement which was then to be made. This is the sentiment of Rom. iii. 25. "Whom God hath set forth, a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, *for the remission of sins that are past in the forbearance of God*; to declare *at this time* his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."—If it be admitted, then, to have had a retrospective efficacy at all, that efficacy must have been the same in extent during the preceding as it is in the subsequent period. If the pardon be universal now, it must have been universal always. It certainly has not become universal, only since the atonement was actually made. Time, on this subject, is of no consideration.—The consequence, then, is, that there never has existed on earth, since sin entered, such a character as an unpardoned sinner. And further; since the doctrine that every *sinner* is pardoned necessarily involves the doctrine that every *sin* is pardoned, it follows, that there never has been committed on earth an unpardoned sin.—I am not aware, that any of those who hold the doctrine will be startled by this representation,

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or disposed to find any fault with it. If they be, they cannot have well considered their ground; for it is evidently no more than its true and legitimate extent.

§ 2. From the universality of pardon being actually involved in the making of the atonement, it follows as an unavoidable consequence,—and the consequence is admitted and avowed,—that the possession of forgiveness is independent entirely of *faith*, of *confession*, of *repentance*, or *turning unto God*. There needs no reasoning to make out this consequence. It is self-evident; and it is granted and maintained. Let us see, then, by a direct and simple reference to the word of God, how this accords with its statements.

First. As to pardon being independent of *faith*, or the belief of the gospel:—what saith the Scripture? Let the following texts, which are a specimen of many, furnish the answer:—Acts x. 43. "To Him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name *whosoever believeth in Him* should receive remission of sins:"—Acts xiii. 38, 39. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him *all that believe* are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses:" To be "justified from all things" is the same thing as to have all things forgiven. It is the forgiveness of sins itself, not the mere sense of a forgiveness already existing, that the Apostle holds out to his hearers; and he holds it out to those who should believe.—The following passage, already cited for another purpose, is of the same description, showing too, in the same way, the true meaning of justification:—Rom. iii. 25, 26. "Whom God hath set forth, a propitiation *through faith* in his blood, to declare his righteousness *for*

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the remission of sins that are past in the forbearance of God; to declare at this time his righteousness that he might be just and *the justifier* of him *who believeth in Jesus.*" God justifies, then, when he gives the remission of sins; and this remission is through faith: he justifies him who believeth in Jesus.—John viii. 34. "I said, therefore, unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for *if ye believe not* that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." To *die in their sins* means to die in the *guilt* of their sins, not merely under their power. The use of the same phrase in other places confirms this. The prophet Ezekiel employs it frequently in this sense. Thus, in chap. iii. 18—20. "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand." Again, in chap. xviii. a comparison of the phraseology of the following verses is very conclusive—the phrases "*in* his sin" and "*in* his iniquity" being explained by the parallel phrases "*for* his sin" and "*for* his iniquity;"—verses 17, 18. "He shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live. As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did that which is not good among his people, lo, even he shall die in his iniquity:"—verses 24, 26. "But when the

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righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.—When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die." They, then, who believe not in Christ, die in their sins,—that is, under the guilt of their sins,—unpardoned.—1 Cor. xv. 17. "And if Christ be not risen, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."—If Christ was not risen, his death had no divine sanction as an atonement for sin;—their faith, therefore, was vain, for it was faith in an unaccepted sacrifice: it was fruitless to them; their guilt being unexpiated, they were "yet in their sins,"—that is, assuredly, as shown on the preceding text, they were under condemnation, unreleased from the sentence of perdition which their sins had brought upon them. This is fully confirmed by the connexion of the verse with the one following,—"Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."—Gal. iii. 10. "For as many as are of the works of the law *are under the curse;* for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. If forgiveness were universal, no man whatever could be under the curse; for to be under the curse is certainly to be under the sentence of condemnation. Of the extent of this curse I shall say a few words by and by, and but a few will be necessary. My present conclusion stands good, independently of all such questions. The "curse of the law" is the law's sentence of condemnation,—no matter for the present what that sentence is; and the apostle affirms a certain class

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of men to be *still under it*,—namely, "as many as are of the works of the law," that is, as many as were persisting to seek justification by such works —they were under the curse,—that is, they were under the law's condemning sentence,—that is, they were unforgiven.

Secondly. The theory makes forgiveness universal independently of *confession*. But what saith the Scripture? 1 John i. 8. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Can any language more plainly imply, that if we do *not* confess our sins, they remain unforgiven? The apostle does not mean to say, that our simply making confession of our sins is the procuring cause of their forgiveness. He had just before said—"The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin;" and he adds immediately after—"If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." But if he does not mean to represent confession as a *sine qua non* to forgiveness, how is that sentiment to be expressed?

Thirdly. The hypothesis is, that forgiveness is irrespective of *repentance* and *turning to God*. But here too the word of God appears to meet it with a frequent and most explicit negative. What is its language?—Acts ii. 38. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for (*us*) the remission of sins." Repentance here, as in some other places where it stands by itself, is that change of mind which includes the renunciation of their former views, and the belief of the truth which Peter and his fellow-apostles had been preaching: and the remission of sins is not assigned as a pre-existing reason for their repentance, or inducement to it, but as a sequence; they are called to repent, not be-

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cause they had been forgiven, but in order to forgiveness.—Still more explicit are the terms of Acts iii. 19. "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." What the "times of refreshing," or revival, are, is not our present inquiry; nor what the connexion of their coming with the previous exhortation. What is now to be noticed is, the call to repentance and returning as necessary to their sins being blotted out. The terms are most explicit: "Repent and be converted, *that* (εἰς τό, *to the end that*) your sins may be blotted out." They were *not*, then, blotted out previously.—This language of the apostles in their first proclamation of the gospel was in harmony with the intimations of their divine Master to them just before his departure:—Luke xxiv. 46, 47. "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that *repentance and remission of sins* should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." The two were to be connected together. Those to whom they were to be preached were no more already forgiven, than they had already repented. The same connexion is stated,—Acts v. 31. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, a prince and a Saviour, to give *repentance* unto Israel *and the forgiveness of sins*." The forgiveness was a gift not already possessed, but to be bestowed; and it was to be bestowed in connexion with repentance.—Isa. lv. 6—8. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,

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saith the Lord." Can any thing be more simple and conclusive? The invitation is to sinners to forsake their former ways and thoughts, and to return to the Lord:—the encouragement held out to compliance is, not that the Lord *has had* mercy, and *has* pardoned, but that he *will have* mercy and *will* pardon; it is his perfect readiness to bestow forgiveness, and to bestow it abundantly, on all who should return to him from their wanderings.—Once more—Acts xxvi. 17, 18: "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in me." From these terms of Paul's commission it is clear, that sinners could no more obtain forgiveness of sins without being "turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God," than they could, without being thus turned, obtain "an inheritance among them that are sanctified."*

§ 3. Another obvious consequence of the hypo-

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* The original words stand thus—"Εξαιρουμενος σε εκ του λαου και των εθνων, εις ους εγω σε αποστελλω, ανοιξαι οφθαλμους αυτων, του επιστρεψαι απο σκοτους εις φως, και της εξουσιας του σατανα επι τον Θεον, του λαβειν αυτους αφεσιν αμαρτιων, και κληρον εν τοις ηγιασμενοις, πιστει τη εις εμε."—The του επιστρεψαι and the του λαβειν seem to be both connected, by the same construction, with the preceding ανοιξαι τους οφθαλμους, "To open their eyes, that they may turn," &c.—"that they may receive," &c. But this does not affect the present argument. It remains equally valid; the forgiveness and the inheritance being alike connected with the opening of the eyes, and with "faith which is in Christ."

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thesis of universal pardon is, that it is needless and preposterous *to pray for forgiveness*, either in our own behalf, or in behalf of others.—It is as unnecessary in this case, as in the former, to set about proving the legitimacy of the consequence; for it is not denied by the abettors of the system,—at least by such of them as at all understand it. "It may "be objected to this view," says Mr. Erskine, "that it is opposed to all the scriptural examples of "prayer, which contain a petition for the pardon of "sin. If sin is already pardoned, what is the use "or meaning of continuing to ask pardon day by "day, or indeed at all? I think that the pardon "which is asked is a sense of pardon, a sense of the "divine nearness and love, and not a repeal of the "sentence of exclusion, which I conceive to be con-"tained in the primary and universal proclamation "of Christ to the world."* Without stopping to dispute about the propriety of the terms in which this statement is made, (which it is a frequent mistake in reasoning to do, when the criticism has no immediate bearing upon the point in discussion,) it is enough that they contain an admission of the inconsistency of prayer for forgiveness with the doctrine of universal pardon,—all such prayer being resolved into petition, not for forgiveness, but for the *sense* of forgiveness.—Now at present I have nothing to do with any of the niceties of metaphysical speculation, or of abstract principle, on the subject of prayer. The simple question is, how does this agree with the recorded practice of the saints in Scripture, or with the directions and injunctions there given them? The difficulty here is not to find, but to select. Selection, however, is not requisite: I take such passages as, without

* On the Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel, p. 58.

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search, present themselves to my recollection. On this principle, then, what shall we make of such passages as the following? I pass over the intercessions of Moses, on different occasions, for divine forgiveness to Israel; those of Solomon, in the various cases of trespass and of calamity, which he supposes in his prayer at the dedication of the temple: and those of Daniel for the same people during their captivity in Babylon. Let the two following petitions of David suffice:—Psal. xxv. 11. "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great:" Psal. li. 1—3, 9. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.—Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities."—The people of God have been in the daily use of these and similar petitions in all ages, before and since the coming of the Son of God. And in offering them, they have been acting in conformity, not only with the natural dictates of conscience, but with the express command of their Lord. Among the petitions of the brief but comprehensive prayer which he taught his disciples, he instructs them to say—"and forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us?"* Is this not a prayer for forgiveness? The answer, according to the new doctrine, is,—No, it is a prayer only for a sense of forgiveness. But unfortunately, the word

* Luke xi. 4. Matth. vi. 12.

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"forgive" occurs in both clauses of the sentence. The petition is "Forgive thou us—for we forgive others:"—and in the gospel by Matthew this is followed up with the solemn assurance—"for if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." What shall we make of this? Does our forgiving men their trespasses signify giving them a sense of our forgiveness? No, certainly. The condition expressed in the prayer—(I use the word *condition* simply in the sense of something without which the blessing sought cannot be obtained)—relates to the state and temper of *our own* minds towards those who have injured us, not to the satisfaction which *they* might enjoy in the assurance of it. The petition, therefore, ought to be interpreted upon the same principle,—that is, according to the plain and obvious meaning of the words, as relating to the exercise of forgiveness on the part of God, not to the satisfaction or peace of our minds in the enjoyment of it. And, while the passage contains an instance of commanded prayer for forgiveness, both the terms themselves of the petition, and our Lord's comment upon them, express the sentiment, as clearly as language can convey it, that those who do not forgive *are themselves unforgiven*. Who will presume to gainsay the Lord's own express declaration—"if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses?"—"Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

§ 4. Another consequence, admitted and defended by the patrons and abettors of universal pardon is, that the only sin by which men can ever be brought into final condemnation is the sin of *unbelief*, or the rejection of the gospel. There is consistency in

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this admission; for it is self-evident that if all are pardoned, and pardoned all, there remains no sin to bring them into judgment. But the hypothesis, in this view of it, suggests a variety of rather interesting queries:—For example—

First. Granting unbelief to be a sin, and the greatest of sins, as in my heart I believe it to be,—how comes it, we are tempted to ask, to form an exception to the act of indemnity? One should think, if *all* sin be pardoned, it is hardly consistent to hold that the *greatest* of sins remains unpardoned!—I can imagine to myself no ground on which this can be the case, except its *not having been included in the atonement.* This indeed is clear. If the atonement is the pardon, and all the sin for which the atonement was made is actually forgiven on the ground of it, then the only conceivable reason for unbelief remaining unpardoned is what I have suggested; for, had it been included in the atonement, it must have been pardoned too.—Well then—

Secondly. Suppose a man, (and the case is of every-day occurrence,) after a long period of unbelieving disregard or rejection of the gospel, is, by the grace of God, brought to the faith of it,—is it a presumptuous question to ask, What becomes of his *previous unbelief?* Either it was included in the atonement, or it was not. If it was not, on what ground is it pardoned? Is there any pardon recognised in scripture, irrespectively of the atonement? And if, again, it *was* included, then have we, in the very teeth of the hypothesis, a sin, the very worst of sins, and a continued course of such sin, *pardoned upon the sinner's believing*, which was *not pardoned before!* I leave the supporters of the hypothesis to choose between the horns of this manifest dilemma. It seems to me, that it must either be thus, or else that there is no guilt in the

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sinner's unbelief, excepting in that of the latest moment of his life,

Thirdly. On this hypothesis of universal pardon, how are we to dispose of *the state of the Heathen?* The atonement being the actual pardon of the sins of all mankind—*their* sins are of course included in the indemnity; they are universally and entirely pardoned. Unbelief supposes the opportunity of hearing and knowing the gospel;—and it is a sin, consequently, with which they are not, and cannot be, chargeable. They stand, therefore, free of all charge—with no sin whatever remaining at their account—in a state of entire and unqualified forgiveness!—First of all, then, are they not, in this respect, better off than those who hear the gospel, and are exposed to the hazard of the only damning sin? If it be answered, as doubtless it will—"No; for they are not in a state of moral and spiritual *fitness* for heaven, and for the enjoyment of God; and it is only the knowledge and belief of the gospel that can impart this fitness:"—then what an extraordinary anomaly we have before us! A sinner pardoned; entirely pardoned; having no sin whatever unforgiven; and at the same time, for want of fitness, excluded from the kingdom of God! Where is this anomalously circumstanced creature to be placed! He has no sin to condemn him to the second death; and yet he is not fit for the heavenly life! He is fit for heaven, as a sinner whose sins are all forgiven; but he is unfit for heaven, as a sinner whose heart has not been renewed. Does the Bible ever present us with any such anomalies? Does it ever thus separate pardon from renovation; and represent sinners as enjoying the one, while they remain destitute of the other? No such thing. And the very circumstance of the theory "putting asunder what God has joined together" should be enough to condemn it,—I do

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not speak of the incongruity in the idea of a *pardoned sinner perishing*, with which the hypothesis has often been pressed; because, in asserting that the perdition is on account of the *guilt of unbelief*, it in so far sets itself free from the imputation of *that* inconsistency.

Fourthly. Not only do such consequences as have been mentioned follow from the hypothesis, but the doctrine itself, that unbelief is the only sin which brings upon man the condemnation to the second death, is in the face of the plain, pointed, and frequent declarations of the word of God. How, for example are we to explain such descriptions of the future judgment as abound there?—"God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil;"—"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the sight of thine eyes and in the imagination of thy heart: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment:"—"But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment: for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned:"—"For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every man may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad;"—"For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law,—in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."*—And more especially still; how does the

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* Eccl. xii. 14; xi. 9. Matth. xii. 36, 37. 2 Cor. v. 10. Rom. ii. 12, 16.

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sentiment, that unbelief is the only damning sin comport with such affirmations as the following, which are but a specimen of many, respecting the grounds of final condemnation?—"Mortify, therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry; *for which things' sake* the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience;"*—"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for *because of these things* cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."†—Does it not follow from this, that they are "*vain words*," by which the abettors of this theory try to persuade the "children of disobedience" that *none of these things* can bring them under condemnation, but that they can be condemned for nothing but unbelief?—Again—"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that *they who do such things* shall not inherit the kingdom of God."‡—Surely it is the guilt incurred by such practices, as well as the moral unfitness indicated by them, that excludes from the kingdom.—"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and

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* Col. iii. 5, 6. † Eph. v. 3—6. ‡ Gal. v. 19—21.

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the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."* The *unbelieving* are only one description of the many that shall be consigned to the second death. It is true that all the rest are unbelieving; but the language most distinctly intimates, that all the other varieties of evil shall subject their perpetrators to that condemnation.—"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them who commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them who do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?"†—And what were those "same things" with which the hasty and severe censor and judge of others is thus charged, as bringing himself as well as them into condemnation with God? They are all the enormities enumerated in the end of the preceding chapter, as characterizing the Gentile world: respecting which, the closing verse of that chapter says,—"Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

I would beseech any who have adopted the sentiment under consideration, to look seriously and candidly at such passages; and, let them not think me presumptuous if I add, to look at them in their plain and simple meaning, and not to set about trying to reconcile them with their hypotheses. It is a just and important sentiment, which none of us ought

* Rev. xxi. 8. † Rom. ii. 1-3.

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ever to forget,—that "A DESIRE TO HAVE SCRIPTURE ON OUR SIDE IS ONE THING; AND A SINCERE DESIRE TO BE ON THE SIDE OF SCRIPTURE IS ANOTHER."* I cannot, for my own part, conceive of any principles of sound and rational criticism, which can make them speak a language consistent with the doctrine in question,—that no sin but unbelief can bring men into final condemnation.

§ 5. But is it not expressly said of God, that he "doth not impute unto men their trespasses?"—and can they, then, be acknowledged as giving a true representation of the God of the Bible, who preach a God that *does* impute their trespasses?—The statement referred to, in such questions, is that made by the Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. v. 19; where he gives the import of the gospel as "the word of reconciliation;"—"to wit, that God was in (or by) Christ reconciling the world unto himself, *not imputing their trespasses unto them.*"—On these words, then, let the reader observe:—

First. There must be the same extent of meaning in the two expressions "reconciling the world unto himself," and "not imputing their trespasses unto them." If the former expression does not mean, that each individual in the world is actually brought into a state of reconciliation to God; then neither is there any necessity for interpreting the latter as meaning, that every individual in the world is actually pardoned, and that trespasses are imputed to none. Now, that the former phrase signifies no such thing as the actual reconciliation to God of every individual of mankind, the evidence is very near, and very satisfactory. For the Apostle, in

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* Whately's Essays on some of the Difficulties in the Writings of St. Paul, p. 312.

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the very next verse, proceeds to state, that on the ground of this "word of reconciliation," he and his fellow labourers, as "ambassadors for Christ," prayed sinners in these terms—"Be ye reconciled to God." But if God had actually reconciled to himself every individual of mankind, there could no room be left, as every reader must perceive, for any such entreaty. Surely they who refused compliance with the entreaty *remained unreconciled*: and, although in this state there is included their continuing in a state of enmity against God in their own "carnal minds," yet the very terms of the Apostle's statement imply, that there is also included their continuing under the guilt of their trespasses,—that these remained charged to their account. So that this passage, which is one of the strong holds of the system, when taken in its connexion with what immediately follows, turns out a witness, not for, but against it.

Secondly. In these circumstances, we are constrained to interpret the passage, in harmony with others to be afterwards noticed, on the general principle, that by the work of Christ, God provided a scheme of reconciliation for the world,—for mankind; a scheme, on the ground of which men "of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" were to be invited into a state of reconciliation with himself; according to which, he "waits to be gracious" to sinners universally; praying them to accept his grace, and imputing the trespasses of none who submit to his offered mercy,—the mercy in which he delights.—The passage is thus parallel with such as John iii. 16. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life." Here, as in the passage under present notice, we have the mission of Christ represented as a manifestation of God's love to

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"the world"—that is, to mankind, to the race of Adam. But although God is thus spoken of "as loving the world," what is the extent of the benefit resulting from the gift of his Son? That *none* should perish? No: but that "*whosoever believeth in him* should not perish." Is it not obvious, then, that the same principle of interpretation must be carried forward to the verse which follows, namely, verse 17. "For God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved?" If it be not, we shall have more than universal pardon; we shall have universal salvation.—But of this more hereafter.

§ 6. Our friends who hold the sentiment of universal pardon are accustomed to say, that although the pardon exists, the benefit of it is not enjoyed by the sinner, unless he believes in it. It may be worth while, then, to consider a little what is meant by this frequent phrase of theirs—*getting the benefit of the pardon.*—With some of them, I am satisfied, it is an inconsiderate way of speaking, little thought having been given to its precise import. It seems to be forgotten by them what a pardon is. The pardon of a transgressor is the actual remission, or cancelling, of all his sins, in such a way, that he can never be brought into condemnation, or visited with punishment, on account of them. Now, what can be meant by a man's not getting the benefit of such a pardon unless he belives in it? Is it no benefit, to be unconditionally and for ever released from the possibility of penal visitation for any of his sins? If not, then pardon is nothing. It is a mere name. According to the scheme I am opposing, the pardon actually exists. I *am* pardoned. My pardon is altogether independent of my believing, repenting, confessing, turning to God. In so far as the pardon itself is concerned, it cannot be made better

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by my coming to Christ. It is already complete and permanent. The benefit of it exists *in itself*,—in the freedom which it implies from the punishment due by the law to my transgressions,—in entire and perpetual exemption from that death which is the wages of sin. The inconsistency of the scheme, in the view which it takes of this death, we shall have occasion to notice immediately.

But by the benefit of the pardon, I presume, it is intended we should understand the sinner's experiencing the sanctifying influence of the belief of the pardon, or of the belief of the atonement considered as involving the pardon to each individual. The atonement (the hypothesis tells us) *is* the pardon; and it is by believing in the pardon that sinners are saved: or, in other words, it is by the faith of their own sins being forgiven in the atonement that they are sanctified; salvation being confined in its meaning to sanctification, and sanctification being by the belief of the pardon. If, then, we are to understand the benefit of the pardon as meaning the sanctifying influence of the belief of it,—then must we say, without dwelling at all on the unwarranted limitation of the scripture term *salvation* to one half only of its true import, that we cannot, by any means, assent to the statement, which would assign to this doctrine of universal pardon a monopoly of spiritual and converting influence,—an exclusive power in producing, instrumentally, the renovation of the heart. The ordinary doctrine, of free pardon by faith in the blood of the Lamb, has been, in innumerable instances, the instrumental means of effecting this blessed change. We know it; we see it; we feel it: and what we see, and feel, and know in our own experience and observation, we have also "heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us." Even those Christians, who have embraced this doctrine, were themselves "renewed

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in the spirit of their minds" by that very truth which they are now rejecting as "another gospel," as the delusion, consequently, of immortal souls, as "man's religion and not God's." And, instead of speaking of sanctification as the *benefit of the pardon*, obtained upon believing in the pardon as already bestowed; it appears to be much more scriptural, to speak of both the pardon and the sanctification as unitedly the *benefit of Christ's righteousness*, obtained together upon believing in his finished work.

§ 7. But connecting pardon with believing has been represented as making faith a *condition* of forgiveness, and as thus trammelling the freeness of gospel grace. The nature of faith, and its connexion with pardon as a part of salvation, have been considered in the former Essay; and I should think it unwarrantable to introduce anew any similar discussion here. That unscriptural views of faith have been entertained, and that, under such unscriptural conceptions of it, it has formed a part of certain systems of self-righteous dependance, is too true. The ways are various, in which this has been done; and few things serve more strikingly to show the power of the self-righteous tendencies of the human heart, than such perversions of a matter so simple. That faith has sometimes been spoken of in such a way as to justify the following representation, it would be foolish to deny:—"According to the common method of religious instruction amongst many truly serious persons, pardon is represented as so dependant on faith, that it is apt to be mistaken for its reward; and then, as these teachers fear that they may appear to offer heaven on too easy terms, they attach to their definition of faith the whole Christian character, in order, as it would seem, to make it more worthy of such a reward.—What is the freeness of the gospel, upon their sys-

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tem, but substituting faith, as the ground of a sinner's hope, in the place of obedience, which is called the legal system?"*—I was startled, indeed, on reading these sentences, to find this represented as the "*common* method of religious instructions amongst *many truly serious persons.*" I could not but suspect this mode of expression to include many more in the condemnation than I conceived to be deserving of it. And in this suspicion I was confirmed by the following statement in the very next page:—"Some theologians have endeavoured to get quit of difficulties, by supposing that the gospel consists of a testimony and a promise—a testimony that Christ died for sin, and a promise that those who believe in this testimony shall be pardoned. But this is still confounding pardon and salvation, and making pardon the recompense of faith."—Is there no way, then, in which pardon can be connected with faith, without the pardon being regarded as the *recompense* of the faith, and the faith as the *ground* of the pardon? To this question the esteemed author of the preceding statements has since given his answer decidedly in the negative:—"It is easy," he says,† "to vary phrases; and it is easy for ingenious minds to deceive themselves by the use of phrases; but it is absolutely impossible in point of fact, for any one to believe that God's condemnation rests upon all men until they have faith in the gospel, and that that condemnation is removed as soon as they have faith in the gospel, without at the same time regarding faith as the ground of his confidence before God. He is thus necessarily led to look *inward* for the ground of his confidence."

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* Erskine on the Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel, p. 46.
† Introductory Essay to Letters by a Lady, p. 15.

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With regard to such statements as these, I would observe—

First. The previous question ought to be—Is it, or is it not the case, that pardon, in the word of God, is connected with believing the gospel? If it be, then it is not ours to do away a divinely instituted connexion, because of any difficulty, whether real or imaginary, which may present itself to our minds, in reconciling it with the freeness of gospel grace. If in the divine testimony such connexion is affirmed, while at the same time forgiveness is affirmed to be by grace, there must be harmony between the declarations; and we may be assured, it is only some misapprehension or other that prevents our discerning it. The question of fact, as to the connexion of pardon with believing, I have already considered, and cannot resume the subject.

Secondly. These representations proceed upon the assumption, that there is no difference between a thing's being a *sine qua non* and its being a *ground* or *meritorious condition*. Now, however prone men may be, under the influence of the self-righteous tendencies of their fallen nature, to make their faith the latter instead of the former, there is certainly an intelligible and material distinction between them. To speak of believing as in any way, or in any degree, the ground of acceptance with God, is subversive of the first principles of the gospel. But to speak of it as simply a *sine qua non*, something necessary to the obtaining and enjoying of forgiveness and the other blessings of God's salvation, or, in one word, to our "having the Son of God, and so having life," is so far from being inconsistent with the freeness of grace, that the Apostle makes use of this very connexion of faith as one of his proofs and illustrations of the perfectly gratuitous nature of the whole scheme. He contradistinguishes faith to works in the matter of justification, and ex-

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pressly says—"Therefore it is of faith, *that it might be* by grace." Rom. iv. 16. Was the Apostle "deceived by the use of phrases?" *He* appears to have felt no impossibility in considering the belief of the gospel as necessary to the obtaining of the blessing, without regarding it as the condition or ground on which the blessing is bestowed. So far from it, that the very gratuitousness of the blessing is, according to him, established and illustrated by its being "of faith;" and faith is for this very reason, among others, chosen and appointed of God as the medium of its bestowment. He had spoken of the "blessedness of the man, as described by David, whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered, to whom the Lord doth not impute sin," but to whom, on the contrary, he "imputeth righteousness without works." He had represented Abraham, the father of the faithful, as the exemplar, as it were, or prototype, of this free justification—as not "justified by works," but having "his faith counted to him for righteousness." The forgiveness, the covering, the non-imputation of sin, is, in Paul's reasoning, the same in effect as the imputation of righteousness; and the blessing, thus variously expressed, is declared to be by faith:—"It was not written for his (Abraham's) sake alone that it was imputed to him," (that is, that his faith was counted to him for righteousness, or that he was justified by faith,) "but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed," (that is, to whom faith shall be counted for righteousness as it was to him, or who shall be justified, as he was, by faith,) "*if we believe* on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead."* Did the Apostle intend by this to represent our believing as the *ground* of our forgiveness, and our

* Rom. iv. 1—8: 23. 24

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forgiveness as the *recompense* of our faith? Infinitely far from it. According to his principle, it was *of faith, that it might be by grace.* Yes; and there are thousands and tens of thousands, who neither perceive nor feel the alleged impossibility, but who enjoy their forgiveness by faith in Christ, and at the same time are humbly sensible of its being entirely by grace, and give that grace, with lowly yet lively joy, the undivided praise.

Thirdly. It seems, in this objection, to be forgotten, that in the scheme of doctrine of which universal pardon is the basis, faith, or believing, is, after all, as indispensably necessary as it is in the other. According to that scheme, it is by faith that justification, or a sense of the pardon, is obtained; nay, it is by faith that the benefit of the pardon, in sanctification, with all that is conceived to constitute salvation, is obtained. Salvation, then, is by faith, in the one system as well as in the other. There is no being saved without it. It is, in either case, a *sine qua non.* Why, then, must it in the one case be regarded as a condition or ground, any more than in the other? The only difference is in the testimony to be believed; but believed in either case it must be, in order to salvation. Mr. Erskine finds fault with theologians for representing the gospel, in order to get quit of difficulties, as "consisting of a testimony and a promise—a testimony that Christ died for sin, and a promise that those who believe in this testimony shall be pardoned." Yet of a testimony and a promise it does consist, according to his own statement of it. "It appears to me," says he, "that the testimony of the Bible is, that *sinners* ARE *pardoned for Christ's sake,* and that the promise is, that those who, through this newly slain and living way, approach to God, will be sanctified, and conformed in the spirit of their minds to the will of God; and this is heaven and

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salvation."* Here, then, we have still a testimony and a promise; and the sinner is given to understand, that he must approach to God in the faith of the testimony; and that in believing the testimony, and approaching to God, he shall experience, in his sanctification, or salvation, the fulfilment of the divine promise. Is not his salvation, then, according to this hypothesis, dependant upon his believing, as well as according to the ordinary one? It will be vain to say in reply, that the connexion of faith with salvation, according to the new scheme, arises from the nature of things, inasmuch as truth cannot operate the saving change upon the mind and heart otherwise than as believed. It is granted; and the truth of the position has been shown in the former Essay, of which, indeed, it constitutes one of the leading principles. But it is plain that, in order to the sinner's "approaching to God by the newly slain and living way," as Mr. Erskine expresses it, he must believe the alleged testimony of the gospel, "that sinners *are pardoned for Christ's sake.*" He cannot approach to God, and he cannot have salvation, otherwise. It is, in one sense, a prerequisite. Shall we say, then, that it is a *condition*, and a *ground* of access to God, and of salvation—and that the fulfilment of the promise of sanctification to those who believe in the pardon and come to God, is the *recompense* of their faith? It is evident, that the bestowment of the Spirit of God is necessary to the truth's working the change in the sinner's heart, in which salvation is made exclusively to consist. Is the bestowment of the Spirit for sanctification, then, in any way the reward of faith? No; for the truth is, there can be no spiritual discernment, nor saving accept-

* Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel, pp. 47, 48.

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ance, of the testimony of God without it. It ought to be granted, that according to both systems faith is indispensable; but that in neither is it to be regarded as at all a condition or ground of salvation, but simply as a necessary means of its attainment. Salvation is *by* faith in both; but in neither *on account of* it.

§ 8. In this connexion, it may be proper to introduce a remark or two on the alleged *selfishness* of the doctrine which connects forgiveness with believing. On this ground, Mr. Erskine holds up the doctrine to unqualified reprobation. In his last publication he writes thus:—"I shall occupy the remainder of this introduction, with some observations on the religion which man makes for himself, as contrasted with the religion of God. The general idea that men have with regard to religion, is, that it consists in their believing something, or doing something, in order to obtain from God forgiveness of their sins, and the enjoyment of security under his protection. They think that there is a forgiveness in God, but that it comes forth only upon those who have a certain character, *i. e.* those who believe or do some particular things. The things to be believed, or to be done, may vary somewhat in the different modes and forms of religion, but this idea runs through them all, that the object to be attained, is a deliverance from penalties, and an assurance of safety—and that the way of attaining it, is by believing something, or doing something. Now it is obvious that this is a system of pure selfishness, and that the man who acts under its influence, must, in every thing that he thinks or does, be serving himself, and seeking his own interest; and that God is considered in it, merely as a being whose power makes it a matter of primary importance, to appease His resentment, and obtain His favour. According to this religion, God is

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sought, not for Himself, but for His gifts—not because He is the God of holy love, and therefore the fountain of life, but because He is the dispenser of rewards and punishments. But the man who acts in a particular way, in order to obtain heaven, or to avoid hell, is as thoroughly selfish (only on a larger scale) as the man who acts in a particular way, to obtain a thousand pounds, or to avoid the gallows. The one glorifies God just as much as the other—they are both evidently following their own interests. And as we should never dream of saying, that he who was seeking to gain the thousand pounds, or to avoid the gallows, was acting for the sake of the person from whom he expected to get the money, or of the judge who pronounced the sentence of the law, so it would be equally absurd to say, that he who was seeking to obtain a pardon or to escape from hell, was acting for the sake of God. He is not acting from love to God, or from a desire to glorify God—he is seeking his own safety. It is not what God is, but what he may get from God, that he cares for. This is the religion of every natural man, whether he be called a Protestant, or a Papist, or a Hindoo, or a Mahometan. It is man's religion; and it is in fact nothing else than his natural selfishness acting in relation to the things of eternity, just as his principle of worldly conduct is selfishness acting in relation to the things of time. So long as the things of this world appear to be enough for happiness, he occupies himself in forming plans to secure his comfort in this world, and when he is constrained to think of the world beyond the tomb, and when he cannot shake from him the thoughts of death, and the charges of conscience, he transfers his selfishness from time to eternity, and forms his plans to secure, if possible, his safety and comfort in that untried and unending

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duration."* And again—"Every religion which does not declare forgiveness to be already past, but teaches that it is to be attained by faith, or prayer, or repentance, and which thus makes it an object of *hope*, and not of *faith*; every such religion must, in the nature of things, be false, because its necessary tendency is not to produce love, but selfishness, and to train the mind in the very element of rebellion."†

There are two things which greatly astonish me in these and various similar statements of this estimable writer. The first is, that he should so strangely confound *selfishness* with *self-love*; the latter a principle common to us with every rational and every sensitive existence, not distinctive of our nature as fallen, but inwoven in its very texture and constitution when it came from the Creator's hand; the former a principle, which may be called the corruption of self-love, leading the creature that is under its influence, to prefer self to fellow creatures and to God, in such a way as to seek its own benefit at the expense of the interests and the honour of both. Many extravagant things have been said and written on the subject of what has been called the disinterested love of God,—that is, love to God simply and abstractly for *what he is*, irrespectively of all consideration of what he was *to us*, and of all regard to our own happiness. There is nothing of this extravagance in the Bible. We find there no requisition, on the part of God, that his creatures should devest themselves of that principle with which he has himself endowed every intelligent and sensitive nature—the desire of enjoyment. On the contrary, that word is full, from beginning to end, of affectionate and urgent appeals addressed to

* Introduction to Letters by a Lady, pp. vi.—viii.
† Introduction to Letters by a Lady, p. xiv.

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it—"Turn ye, turn ye,—FOR WHY WILL YE DIE!" may be taken as the spirit of many a kind expostulation,—the substance of many an importunate entreaty,—the burden of many a song of the Charmer. —I am far from meaning to deny that such a thing is possible, as a love to God that springs *merely* from self-love; and which may therefore, with propriety, be denominated selfish. It is love, (so called, but unworthy of the name,) *solely* for the sake of benefits conferred, irrespective of any complacent delight in the excellencies of the divine character. This can hardly be called even gratitude. It is love, not of the giver, but of the gift; it springs from, and terminates in, self. The truth is, the two feelings, of grateful and complacential love,—love to God for what he hath done, and love to God for what he is, —for his benefits and for his character,—go inseparably together.—In the breast of a *holy* creature, it is impossible to imagine them disunited. Such a creature delights in God, for the pure and spotless loveliness of his nature; but he never can separate this delight from the view of the same infinite Being as his own friend and benefactor; so that holy delight, and melting gratitude, and unsuspecting confidence, blend harmoniously together, and form, not indeed one feeling, but one happy state and habitude of soul. The thought of suffering never so much as enters into his mind; for in truth the very imagination of the infliction of suffering on an unoffending and sinless creature, would at once devest Deity of his loveliness. He would be no longer amiable; nor would there, consequently, be a possibility of loving him.—With regard, on the other hand, to a *sinful* creature, how stands the case? In the heart of such a creature, there is neither genuine gratitude for divine goodness, nor complacent satisfaction in divine excellence. And when God in Christ is revealed by the Holy Spirit to the soul, both enter

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and take possession of the heart together. The one never exists without the other. On the cross, the two inscriptions stand alike conspicuous, "GOD IS LOVE" and "GOD IS LIGHT." Both are seen together; both are believed together; and the love which springs from this faith regards God under both aspects. It includes alike gratitude to the God of love, and delight in the God of holiness. That men are too apt to regard salvation as consisting in deliverance from guilt and its penal consequences, and to overlook the still higher view of it as consisting in deliverance from sin and conformity to God, is a melancholy fact. But to charge a doctrine as purely selfish, and destitute of every thing spiritual and divine, because it involves in it an appeal to the principle of self-preservation and the love of happiness, is, I cannot but think, under the semblance of accusing man, to "charge God foolishly;" not only for having given this principle so firm and uneradicable a fixture in the constitution of our own and every nature, but also for having, in his word, addressed himself to it under every variety of form,—of warning and invitation, of dissuasion and encouragement, of threatening and promise; holding forth to the eye of fear and of hope, the terrors of his wrath and the allurements of his love, life and death, blessing and cursing, the joys of heaven and the woes of hell.

But I am not only surprised that Mr. Erskine should not have duly discriminated between self-love and selfishness, and should thus have reprobated a doctrine as unworthily, and purely selfish because it holds out the offer of pardon, and of all the blessings of salvation, as an inducement to the reception of it; I am astonished, too, at his not perceiving that, on the supposition of his charge being well founded, his own theory is, at least as deeply, in the same condemnation. He tells us, for example, that "a man cannot submit in heart

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to God, until he knows himself to be safe in God's hands; and he cannot know himself to be safe in God's hands, until he knows himself to be forgiven;" that "every movement of man's mind, until he knows himself to be forgiven, is in reality a movement of selfishness and rebellion," and that "no religion can save a man from sin, or put him in a condition to love God, and to serve God from love, except a religion which reveals to him God's love already bestowed, and God's forgiveness already past, as the objects of his faith;" that "we can only love, by knowing ourselves loved and forgiven:"—"if an external conduct," he says, "were all that the law of God required, then a principle of selfishness might obey it, and a hope of obtaining pardon, and of avoiding punishment, might be a sufficient motive to operate on that selfishness; but if the law really requires love, then nothing short of a personal assurance of being loved and forgiven can be a sufficient motive; for it is absolutely certain, that no man can love God, or look upon him otherwise than as an enemy, until he knows that he has forgiven him his sins, and loves him as a father; for 'we love God because he first loved us;'"—"If a man can be saved without a personal assurance that his sins are forgiven him, he may be saved without confidence in God, or love to God, or giving glory to God; for he cannot have confidence in God, nor can he love God, nor give glory to God, until he knows that his sins are forgiven."*

Now, what is the amount of all this? Is there no selfishness here? If the sinner, in order to the submission of his heart to God, must first know his own safety in God's hands;—if he only loves

* Introduction to Letters by a Lady, &c. pp. xiv. xxx. xxxi. xxxii.

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God when he is assured of his being forgiven;—if he cannot otherwise love God, have confidence in him, or give him glory:—then assuredly he does not love God for what God is in himself, but for what he is *to him;* he loves him not for the perfections of his character, but as bestowing forgiveness! Is not this the very same principle, so severely condemned as characteristic of the doctrine which connects pardon with believing, and as constituting that doctrine man's religion, and not God's? If it be true, that "earnestness in *this* religion is the earnestness of a son who fawns upon his father for the sake of his estate;" what is earnestness in the other, but the earnestness of a son who fawns upon his father for having given him his estate? Where is the great difference in point of principle? If the one "cannot love God, and cannot serve God, for God's sake, but for the sake of his own private ends"—is it better, at all, with the other? It is avowed, that "so long as a man is not sure that God loves him, and has forgiven him, he cannot be satisfied with God as he is." And this is one of the first principles of a system which condemns that which it disowns, on account of its not regarding God as he is in himself, but "merely as a power that can inflict injuries, and bestow benefits!" It is the word "merely," here, that renders the charge a calumny. We disown the imputation. We *do*, indeed, consider God as "a power that can inflict injuries, and bestow benefits." So he himself teaches us to regard him; to deprecate his displeasure in the one view, and to seek his friendship in the other; to flee from the wrath to come, because "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"—and to grasp, with all eagerness, at his offered favour, because "in his favour is life," and because "blessed are the people whose God is the Lord." But to allege that

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this is all; that there is nothing in our scheme of love to God *for what he is;* that it "does not consider God as in himself the Fountain of living waters;" that it "does not make God's character to be a matter of any importance;" that it "does not consider him as a Father;" that it "denies both his love and his holiness;" that it "tramples under foot the Son of God, and all that is contained in his incarnation, and death, and resurrection!" Ah! my friend, these are heavy imputations; imputations from which my whole soul shrinks with trembling. I cannot but think the terms appropriate, which you fancy may be used respecting such sayings—that they are "harsh and presumptuous;" and, although I believe you in earnest when you add—"I feel it to be the kindest thing that I can say, because I am persuaded that it is the truth;" yet my heart swells, and my eye fills, for very grief, that you should ever have come to think such things true of those with whom you have taken "sweet counsel, and gone to the house of God in company;" and true also of those doctrines, which you have known to be the consolation of the souls of so many of God's children in seasons of sorrow, and their peace, and hope, and joy, in passing through the valley of the shadow of death. As you have yourself spoken plainly, you will not be offended by plainness in return. I think you in error, and no error can be entirely sinless. Your error seems in part to have originated in a too exclusive contemplation of the *love* of the divine character, along with a misconception and partial view of its nature and exercise, in relation to the other attributes of Deity. You have been so captivated with the lovely, that you have forgotten the awful. It is my prayer, that the Spirit of God may bring you back from this wandering; give you to look at the whole of the divine charac-

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ter anew, as it appears in the lessons of the Cross; to see the awfulness of the lovely, and the loveliness of the awful—the two united inspiring affectionate fear, and reverential love; and that he may graciously grant you repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth!

§ 9. But, to return from this digression. There is another description of evidence adduced in support of the doctrine of universal pardon, of which it is necessary for me to take some notice; although I cannot enter into it at any length, without being in danger of roaming into adjacent fields of argument, and extending this Essay quite beyond due bounds. I allude to the question respecting the nature and extent of the curse pronounced by God against the transgression of his law. I can enter no further into the discussion of this question (a question far from being without its difficulties—its "things hard to be understood") than as it has been introduced into the present controversy. According to the advocates of the scheme of universal pardon, there is positive proof of all being forgiven, in the fact that all are actually delivered from the curse. Could this be made out, it would be a very simple and decisive way of settling all debate. The forgiveness of sin is the remission of its penalty; so that if, in point of fact, the penalty be remitted, there is in such remission an irrefragable evidence, more than sufficient to silence all argumentation, that the sin is pardoned. Let us see, then, how this argument is put. "But, it may be asked," says Mr. Erskine, "what sort of a pardon is that which admits of a man's being finally condemned? Is it consistent with justice that a man should be condemned for an offence which had been already pardoned? No, surely! What is the meaning, then, of a man being pardoned, and yet condemned after all? The explanation is just this: he is not

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condemned for the offence which had been pardoned, but for a new one; he is not condemned for breaking the law, but for rejecting the gospel. Whilst man was under the dispensation of the law, the condemnation was for breaking the law; and *now* when, through the death of Christ, we are redeemed from the transgressions that were under the first covenant, and delivered from *that* condemnation, and are placed under the dispensation of the gospel, the condemnation is *for rejecting the gospel*, see John xii. 48. As the dispensation of the law was universal, so the dispensation of the gospel is universal. And it is from the condemnation of the law that the pardon of the gospel delivers us. But, for the better understanding of this, we must first understand the nature of the penalty denounced by the law. The penalty, according to the record, is this: 'In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die.' Men, by their traditions, have converted this penalty into a threefold death—death temporal, death spiritual, and death eternal. But death spiritual is nothing more or less than the sin itself—for sin is the shutting God out from the heart, and that is shutting out spiritual life. And, therefore, if I am told that spiritual death is the punishment of sin, I might answer, then sin is the punishment of spiritual death, for they are one and the same thing. And death eternal is not a punishment under the law, but under the gospel. *The death denounced by the law was just the separation of soul and body.* This does not, however, make the penalty nugatory; for the soul which had shut God out must have been miserable in its state of separation from the body. This was the sentence on the whole race—and whilst it remained unreversed, it must have kept every man in his grave—it must have lain upon every man like a tombstone, and kept him down—no one could

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have risen. But if death be the penalty, resurrection is the reversal of the penalty. And what is pardon but the reversal of a penalty? It is true, then, of every man, who is to be raised from the dead, that with regard to him the sentence of the law is reversed, or, in other words, that he is pardoned. But we know that there is to be a resurrection of the whole race, both of the just and of the unjust. Every man is to be raised, the unbeliever as well as the believer. So that, with regard to every man, the penalty of the law is reversed, that is, he is pardoned; and thus we see the meaning of that text, 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us,' Gal. iii. 13.; and of that other, 'for which cause he is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions which were under the first testament, they that are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance,' Heb. ix. 15.; and of that other, 'as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive,' 1 Cor. xv. 22.; and of that other, Jesus Christ 'is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe.' And thus also we see the meaning of that passage in 1 Tim. ii. 6. where it is said, 'that Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom *for all* to be testified in due time'—for in the resurrection of the unbelievers a testimony will be given that Christ had died for them—for only thus could they have been delivered from the power of the grave. This also is the explanation of those passages in the fifth chapter of the Romans, which assert that the redemption by the second Adam is co-extensive with the fall by the first Adam. And thus it is that the preaching of the resurrection of Christ as the second Adam, is in fact the preaching of the gospel to all men, because it is the pledge of resurrection to all men; and, therefore, it contains

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an assurance to all men, that God has put away their sin, and forgiven them. And it is for this reason, that the resurrection of Christ, as well as the resurrection of all men, is so much insisted on by the apostles, both in their sermons, as appears from the Acts of the Apostles, and also in the epistles."*

I have given this extract at full length, that I may not appear, by partial citation, to do injustice to the argument. I remark upon it—

First. The doctrine of universal pardon, as here stated, is so far at least consistent with itself, in the answer which is given to the very natural and therefore very common question, "What is the meaning of a man being pardoned, and yet condemned after all?" The reply is, that he is "not condemned for breaking the law"—that would have been, of course, a flat contradiction in terms—"but for rejecting the gospel." Knowing this to be the ground assumed, I have not insisted, as some readers might expect me to do, upon the apparently anomalous supposition of a pardoned sinner ultimately perishing; because, according to the hypothesis, the perdition comes not upon him for the sins that have been pardoned, but for a new set of sins altogether—or rather, I should say, for the one sin of unbelief, or the rejecting of the gospel. It may here be remarked, however, that, with much of apparent explicitness in the distinction between being condemned for sins against the law, and being condemned for unbelief, there is in reality no small difficulty and confusion. The guilt of all sin lies in the principle of it,—in the state of heart from which it arises and of which it is the indication. External violations of law are effects and manifesta-

* Introductory Essay to Letters by a Lady, pp. xlvi. xlix.

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tions of that *enmity of the heart against God*, which is in fact the essential element of all moral evil. The Apostle represents this enmity as at once proved by actual insubordination to law, and at the same time preventing the possibility of subjection to it:—"The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."*—Now what is the source of unbelief? It is the very same. It arises from this very enmity; and it partakes of guilt, just in proportion as it has this origin. The principle of evil, then, in the violation of the law, and in the rejection of the gospel, is the very same. Are we, therefore, to say, that the enmity of the sinner's heart is pardoned as far as it is indicated by violations of law, not pardoned in as far as it discovers itself in the refusal of grace? This were a very extraordinary fancy. For in fact, when we say that the rejection of the gospel arises from the enmity of the heart against God, we only say, in other words, that it arises from fondness for those very sins that are condemned by the law. But if fondness for the sins which are condemned by the law be the cause of unbelief, and that which constitutes its criminality; then unbelief itself is in truth a violation of the principles of the law. And so it is; and of all violations of them the most flagrant. The law is summed up in love; and unbelief, like all other descriptions of transgression of the divine will, has the essence of its evil in the want of this love. When we say, then, that unbelief is to be punished with death eternal, *what is it* that is to be so punished? It cannot be simple unbelief; but unbelief as connected with its moral causes. Suppose, then, a man is addicted to licentious indulgences. He loves his sins; and he re-

* Rom. viii. 7.

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fuses the gospel, because he cannot find in his heart to give them up. What are we to make of his case? Eternal death is the wages of his unbelief, and he *must* suffer it:—but the moral causes of that unbelief are themselves, in spirit and in fact, violations of the law,—which violations the theory affirms to be pardoned; and how *can* he suffer it? To this we might add, that there are many sins to which unbelief itself leads, and into which the malignant spirit of it enters, but which are also, at the same time, violations of the law. What is to be made of these? Is the unbelief to be punished, and the sins to be pardoned?—Although, therefore, there is the appearance of explicitness in the distinction made between the punishment of sins against the law and the punishment of unbelief; yet, in fact, the principles of the two are so much the same, the evils of both are so intimately blended, and their reciprocal influence is so close and so constant, that in appropriating their respective deserts it seems impossible to separate them; so that the same thing must be both pardoned and punished.

Secondly. I have already referred to the obvious difficulty, with which the abettors of universal pardon feel their scheme encumbered, arising from those texts in which the forgiveness of sin is promised to sinners who repent and turn to God by faith in Christ;—such texts as,—"Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out:"—"Let him return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Now the general principle of the quotation from Mr. Erskine is adopted for solving this difficulty. This, however, appears preposterous in the extreme. A distinction is made between what are called the first and the second condemnations; the former meaning condemnation for offences against the law,—the latter condemnation

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for rejecting the gospel. And such passages are disposed of at once, by saying, they relate to sins of the second condemnation. I have called this solution preposterous: and I cannot but think that any who have adopted it must be satisfied, on a moment's reflection, that the term is not misapplied. The only question is, are such passages as those just cited invitations of the gospel? To this question it is impossible to give a negative answer. Must not the invitations of the gospel, then, when the offer of pardon is held out, have reference to sins of a *previously existing* condemnation? Suppose the gospel message presented to a company of sinners *for the first time*. What do we mean, when, after stating its simple facts and truths, we say to such—"Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out?" If they have not heard the gospel before, they have no sins, according to the theory of universal pardon, but what are already blotted out. How literally preposterous it is, to imagine the offer of pardon to relate to sins that are yet to be contracted!—and to be contracted too by the very rejection of the offer! An offer of pardon is held out for no existing sin; but there is sin incurred by the rejection of this offered forgiveness of nothing; and this is the sin of which the forgiveness is to be obtained by accepting the offer! To such palpable contradiction and absurdity does this solution reduce us. It must be plain to the capacity of a babe, that the deliverance which the gospel offers must be deliverance from a condemnation existing previously to its announcement; and not merely from a condemnation to be induced by the refusal of it. When Christ says to the Jews—"*If ye believe not* that I am He, ye shall *die in your sins*;" the very terms of his address imply, that the sins of which he speaks are sins which existed previously to their unbelief, in the guilt of which their

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unbelief would confirm and leave them, and from which, if they should believe, their faith would deliver them. I am not denying the guilt of unbelief. I am satisfied that it is a sin of the very deepest dye. But what I say is, that unbelief, and the guilt arising from it, cannot be that of which sinners are promised the pardon when the gospel message first comes to their ears. This would be like offering a remedy for a disease, which has no existence when the remedy is offered, but which is to be induced by the refusal to take it.

Thirdly. The objection made to *spiritual death* being regarded as a part of the penal consequences of the first transgression, is not a new one. It is not without plausibility; but when terms are properly explained, it will not stand. Is there no difference between falling into sin, and being left, in consequence, to a permanently depraved state of soul, a state of alienation from God, and incapacity for enjoying him? The only question is, whether this abandonment of man to the sway of those selfish and sensual principles that had been insinuated into his heart, was a consequence of his original apostacy. If it was, (and at present I must be allowed to assume it,) it must have been a judicial consequence. And without question, being left in this state of moral depravation and spiritual incapacity, is the greatest of all possible evils. It was the first effect of sin, and an effect that has come down to all the successive generations and individuals of mankind, without exception. Every renewed and spiritual mind will regard this as the very bitterest ingredient of the curse, and the most awful and affecting part of the judicial consequences of transgression. When we speak of God as *inflicting* this part of the curse, we mean, not of course that he produced or infused, or even by direct influence confirmed, any principles of evil; but simply that

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he left man under the dominion of those which he had voluntarily admitted. The same thing is repeatedly said of God, and said when punitive visitation is plainly intended. The reader may look to such passages as Rom. i. 24, 26, 28. Psal. lxxxi. 12, &c. Although not of the nature of direct and positive infliction; this is certainly the most fearful of all possible *negations*, or, *privative* judgments.—But the truth is, although I have suggested these few simple observations, the discussion is irrelevant to our present inquiry. I proceed, therefore, to notice—

Fourthly. The unaccountable oversight, and consequent inconsistency, into which the writer of the preceding statement has fallen:—not indeed that I should greatly marvel at it,—for truth alone is in harmony with itself.—He says—"The death denounced by the law was just the separation of soul and body. This does not, however, make the penalty nugatory; for the soul which had shut God out must have been miserable in its state of separation from the body."—Now, first of all, is not this an admission, that, but for this misery of the soul, the penalty would have been nugatory; and yet the soul's misery is not allowed to have formed any part of the penalty! What, then, is this, but *denying* and *admitting*, in the very same sentence, that the misery of the soul forms part of the legal penalty or curse denounced against sin, as well as the death of the body? And yet the author goes on to say—"This was the sentence on the whole race; and whilst it remained, it must have kept every man in his grave; it must have lain upon every man like a tomb-stone, and kept him down; no one could have risen. But if death be the penalty, resurrection is the reversal of the penalty? And what is pardon but a reversal of a penalty? It is true, then, of every man who is to be raised from the dead, that

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with regard to him the sentence of the law is reversed, or, in other words, that he is pardoned. But we know that there is to be a resurrection of the whole race, both of the just and of the unjust. Every man is to be raised, the unbeliever as well as the believer. So that, with regard to every man, the penalty of the law is reversed, that is, he is pardoned."—But is it not a marvellous thing, that in this argument,—an argument which, but for the talent of its framer, I should have said had scarcely speciousness enough to catch even the least reflecting minds,—that in this argument, the poor miserable soul appears to have slipped out of remembrance; and the attention to have been confined to a part of the curse which, irrespectively of that misery, had just been admitted to be comparatively nugatory.—Had the writer said nothing about the soul at all, we might have placed him in such a dilemma as the following:—Is the soul, in its state of separation, happy or miserable? If, when at death it quits the body, it be *happy*, (and if happy, it must be *holy*,)—then all the evils consequent on sin, all the penal effects of transgression, are confined to this life and to the body; the soul partakes not at all of the wages of sin, and it needs, therefore, no redemption: if, on the other hand, the soul in its separate state be *miserable*, then we have something more than dissolution, or temporal death, as the wages of transgression,—we have the very *second death* which the theory denies to be any part of these wages! The abettors of the theory in general may again choose between the horns of this dilemma. Our author, however, has saved us the necessity of pressing it, by making his choice. He grants the misery of the soul in its state of separation from the body; but, very inconsiderately, proceeds to argue, as if the death of the body were all that constituted the penalty of sin. He involves himself in another

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dilemma. When Christ, as mediator, redeems from the curse, "the penalty," according to him, "is reversed"—the *entire* penalty; and this is the case with regard to *every* man. Either, then, in this reversal of the penalty, the deliverance of the soul from its misery is included; or it is not. *If it be not*, then what have we?—all men redeemed from the comparatively nugatory part of the curse, and left under its infinitely more fearful part,—the *body* redeemed, and the *soul* left in its wretchedness:—and *if it be*, then we have all mankind, not merely pardoned, but fully and eternally saved, in body and soul together!—It is evident, that every scheme which limits the curse to temporal death, and the redemption by Christ to redemption from the grave, leaves the immortal spirit unprovided for. It does not seem, indeed, to be duly considered, what temporal death is. It is called, and called truly, the dissolution of the soul and the body. But then, those questions which are beyond expression the most interesting are left without a solution—the questions, of intense solicitude, respecting the immortal soul. We know what becomes of the body—first a putrid mass, and then a few handfuls of dust,—both alike unconscious, incapable of either suffering or enjoyment, neither enduring the one, nor sensible of its loss of the other. Comparatively speaking, who cares for it? Our anxieties are about the disimprisoned soul, the deathless spirit, living, conscious, acutely susceptible of suffering or of enjoyment. Oh! what is the clay tenement, compared with its immortal inhabitant!—Yet, if the curse be the death of the body,—then, since redemption from the curse is admitted in the argument to be commensurate with the extent of the curse, it follows that the full extent of the redemption by Christ is the redemption of the body; in which case, there is no redemption provided for the miserable soul! The price

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has been paid for incomparably the least valuable part of the man. The dust has been redeemed, at an infinite cost, from the prison, in which it might have slept for ever in its insensible nothingness; while the never-dying spirit, with all its eternal sensibilities and capacities, is left without remedy in its impurity and woe, and exclusion from the "Holy Light" of the universe!—This leads me to observe—

Fifthly. It seems to indicate by far too low an estimate of the evil of sin on the one hand, and of the redemption by Christ on the other, to consider temporal death as the full amount of the curse on account of the former, and deliverance from the grave, consequently, the full amount of the redemption effected by the latter. I can neither, for my own part, imagine the curse against sin to be exhausted in temporal death, considering what sin is, as rebellion against infinite authority, purity, and love, and, in purpose and tendency, the very dethroning of the Eternal; nor that a scheme, so full of divine wonders as the mediation of the Son of God, should have no other object, and no other effect, than the rescuing of the body from the grave. And yet this must be all, if the dissolution of soul and body be all the curse; for according to the extent of the curse must be the extent of the redemption. I am not at present arguing with those who deny that there is any such thing as the second, or eternal death, but with those who deny it to be the sanction of the law, and conceive it to belong to the new dispensation, and to be the punishment of unbelief. If this indicates a strong impression of the guilt of unbelief, it indicates at the same time too light an impression of the evil of sin as transgression of the law. There appears to me, moreover, a very strange incongruity, in making the consequences of rejecting the remedy

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not merely exceed, but exceed by even infinite degrees, the evils from which the remedy was provided to deliver. Certainly the perdition from which Christ came to redeem sinners, was a perdition to which sinners were *previously exposed*, not the perdition which they were to incur by rejecting *Him*. Was this perdition, then, no more than the loss of the mortal, insensible, and comparatively worthless bodily frame? If so, and if the second death, the irrecoverable ruin of soul and body in hell, is to be the result of unbelief—the punishment for refusing the offered remedy:—what an impression is this fitted to make! the impression, distressingly painful, (because so allied to impiety,) and yet unavoidable, that the certain endurance of the death included in the curse might have been preferable to the tremendous risk incurred by disregarding the deliverance from it! What consistency is there in the hypothesis, that we incur more, even infinitely, by our unbelief, than we obtain by our faith; more, even infinitely, by refusing the remedy, than that for which the remedy is provided! It is surely a melancholy view which is thus given of the mediation of Christ—that the death which is incomparably the most fearful, compared with which the other is as nothing, should owe its very existence entirely to that mediation; that it should not be at all the evil from which it achieves deliverance, but only that to which the refusal of it exposes! so that the actual amount of wo should be greater, and that by infinitude, in consequence of Christ's work, than it would have been had he never come into the world!—for then there would, on this hypothesis, have been no such thing as eternal misery;—the second death had been unknown!

Sixthly. There seems to be still further inconsistency in the statement just cited from Mr.

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Erskine. He says, the death threatened against sin is just the dissolution of soul and body. What, then, ought *a pardon* to be? Ought it not to be *exemption* from the threatened penalty? But if temporal death be the amount of the curse, the curse is actually endured; dissolution actually takes place; the woes of life are suffered, and they terminate invariably in the grave. What description of pardon, then, is it, according to which the sentence of condemnation is fully executed? Mr. Erskine defines pardon a *reversal* of the penalty; but does not a proper pardon consist in *exemption* from it? When the death threatened is considered as including eternal death, there *is* exemption, exemption from all in the sentence that comparatively deserves to be named, while, at the same time, by this very exemption, the sting is taken out of temporal death, and the grave devested of its terrors. But, according to the present hypothesis, there is no proper pardon at all; for there is no exemption from the penalty. If, in reply, it shall be said, that there is exemption from the *continuance* of the penalty, I answer by observing—

Seventhly. Supposing it true, that temporal death is the penalty of transgression, and that resurrection is the reversal of the penalty, that this is the proper idea of a pardon, and that, all partaking of the resurrection, all are pardoned;—it is surely reasonable to conceive, that what the Scriptures represent as coming to sinners by Jesus Christ should be *a benefit.* We cannot think or speak of deliverance from the curse, without having in our minds the conception of an advantage or blessing. Now, it is admitted by the supporters of universal pardon, that, although the resurrection comes to all, it shall be to the impenitent and unbelieving not a resurrection "to life," but a resurrection "to damnation." Is this, then, a benefit, an advantage,

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a blessing? It seems to me utterly vain to speak of the resurrection *abstractly, or in itself considered*, as a benefit. The resurrection *cannot* be so considered, any more than *existence* can be abstracted from all consideration of the condition in which it is possessed. There cannot be a greater outrage on common sense and common feeling, than the sentiment, which has sometimes been hastily sported, that it is better to exist in misery than not to exist at all. There is the same absurdity in separating the resurrection from its consequences. The body lies in a state of absolute unconsciousness, destitute of all sensation, and of all sense of the loss which it has sustained; and, as far as the present argument is concerned, may be considered as annihilated. It rises to *suffering*—to *endless suffering*. By the re-union, then, of body and soul, there is nothing gained but an augmentation of suffering. Instead of the soul suffering by itself, the body rises to suffer with it. The subject is most solemn; but I must deliberately say, that I can regard it as nothing better than a mockery of the woes of the wretched victims of their own delusions, to speak of the resurrection as, in such circumstances, a benefit! The restoration of the union, which death had dissolved, is only, by completing the man, increasing his capabilities of suffering. The grave is, in this case, I cannot hesitate to say, a blessing, and the resurrection a heavier curse than the death from which it sets free. Which leads me to remark—

Eighthly. The simple word *the resurrection*, and the phrase *the resurrection of the dead*, are in different instances used to denote, not the resurrection generally, but the resurrection *to life*. The resurrection of the wicked is spoken of in Scripture with comparative infrequency; and the resurrection of the just is represented under the simple

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term the *resurrection*, as if the other were not worthy of the name. Thus our Lord says, in Luke xx. 34—36, "The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage; but they who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and *the resurrection from the dead*, neither marry nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of *the resurrection*." Thus, too, Paul—Phil. iii. 10, 11. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto *the resurrection of the dead*." The resurrection of the dead, then, considered as obtained by the mediation of Christ, is the resurrection to life. And in this connexion I may suitably introduce a passage which the advocates of universal pardon consider a very decisive one in their favour: namely, 1 Cor. xv. 20—23, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man [came] death, by man [came] also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." On this passage, then, let it be observed,

(1) It is very unfair and illogical, to consider it as any proof of temporal death being the amount of the curse. The Apostle, like a good reasoner, does not go beyond his subject. That subject is, not the future state, but the resurrection. This particular of the Christian hope was disbelieved and ridiculed by the Heathen philosophers; and, probably from this very cause, scepticism respecting it had crept into the Corinthian church. The Apostle, therefore, keeps to his point. It is of the body,—the death of the body,—the resurrection of the body,—that he is treating; not of the soul at all. They, therefore,

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who draw the inference that the death of the body is all the curse, and its resurrection all the redemption, only show that they have somewhat less logic than the Apostle,—who, even apart from his inspiration, whatever Socinians may say of him, was no bungling reasoner.

(2.) What is the "resurrection of the dead" of which the Apostle here speaks? It is the resurrection of the just,—the resurrection to life. This appears, not merely from the language of verses 20 and 23, where Christ is styled the "first-fruits of *them that slept*,"—and they that slept are, not all mankind, but "*they that are Christ's* at his coming;"—but also from his own full and explicit description of the resurrection meant by him, in the subsequent part of the chapter—verses 42—44. "So also is *the resurrection of the dead:* it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown an animal body, it is raised a spiritual body." So that here we have another example of "the resurrection," without epithet or addition, signifying the resurrection to life.

(3.) By comparing verses 20—23 with verses 44—49, we learn still more clearly what the resurrection is, which stands in contrast, as coming by the second Adam, with the death which came by the first. When it is said in verse 21, "As by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead," I grant that it wears much of the appearance of a general proposition, inclusive of mankind. Yet we have seen how the Apostle describes what he means, in his reasoning, by "the resurrection of the dead:"—and our conclusion is greatly strengthened, when, pursuing the contrast between the first and second Adam, he adds to the description already cited—"There is an animal body, and there is a

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spiritual body: and so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [is] a quickening spirit. Howbeit, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is animal, and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As [is] the earthy such [are] they also that are earthy; and as [is] the heavenly, such [are] they also that are heavenly. And, as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."—No one will say, that this description of the resurrection which comes by Christ is true of mankind. Yet this is the resurrection which he contrasts with the death that came by Adam. This alone is a blessing,—this alone deserving of such particular and emphatic mention. It may be true, that, in a certain general sense, the resurrection of all the dead is by Christ, as forming a part of the general constitution of things, resulting from his mediation:—but this is not at all the point on which the Apostle fixes his own or his reader's attention. It is the resurrection to life,—to a glorious conformity with the risen and exalted Head.

(4.) In these circumstances, what is the proper meaning of the 22d verse—"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive?" We have seen, that, in the passage, it is not of the resurrection of mankind universally, (although this doubtless is involved in some parts of his argument,) but of the "*resurrection of the just*," that the Apostle is treating. Now it is a canon of interpretation, simple and universally recognised, that a general or universal term ought to be understood as corresponding, in the extent of its import, with the subject of which the author is treating. If the subject here, therefore, be the resurrection of the just,—then the twenty-second verse, interpreted agreeably to this canon, will be—"as in Adam *they all*

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die, even so in Christ *they shall all be made alive.*" And this, I am satisfied, is the true meaning. Those who explain it otherwise may try, how they can contrive to apply to mankind generally the descriptions of the resurrection throughout the chapter.

§ 10. The mention of such universal terms, in connexion with the sin of the first Adam and the righteousness of the second, naturally brings me to the consideration of that important, and, in some respects, difficult subject—THE EXTENT OF THE REDEEMER'S ATONEMENT.—I feel no disposition to shrink from this subject. It is my sincere prayer, that the Spirit of God may guide me by the light of his word, and enable me to place it in a scriptural point of view! And while I say this, I feel there is a likelihood that, while I differ from the advocates of universal pardon, I may not exactly agree with some of those who have written against them. It is necessary again to say, that I confine myself to those views of this subject which immediately bear on the present controversy about pardon. Were I to take off this restriction, a field almost interminable would open before me, comprehending all the points in discussion between the ranks of Arminianism and Calvinism. My desire is, to be kept untrammelled by any *ism* but *scripturism*:—and I cannot but express my surprise, that those who wish to be regarded as so peculiarly apostolic, and who have, some of them at least, avowed the principle that no book ought to be read but the Bible, should have thought it worth their while to seek for buttresses to their cause in the writings of Luther and other Reformers and Fathers, and in the Creeds and Confessions of different churches.

The texts usually adduced in support of the doctrine of universal pardon, are those in which the design of the atonement is spoken of in general and unrestricted terms; in which it is represented as *for all, for all men, for the world, for the whole world*:

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—"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of *the world.*"—"God so loved *the world*, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life:"—"God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that *the world* through him might be saved;"—"We have seen him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of *the world:*"—"And the bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of *the world:*"—"God was, in Christ, reconciling *the world* unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them:"—"And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of *the whole world:*"—"For as by the offence of one [judgment came] upon *all men*, to condemnation; even so by the obedience of one [the free gift came] upon *all men* to justification of life:"—"This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have *all men* to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom *for all*, to be testified in due time:"—"For the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to *all men*, teaching us," &c.—"We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death—that he, by the grace of God, should taste death *for every man;*"—"The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance."*—Of more than one of these passages notice has already been taken. There are several others, of

* John i. 29. John iii. 16, 17. John iv. 42. John vi. 51, 2 Cor. v. 19. 1 John ii. 2. Rom. v. 18. 2 Tim. ii. 2—6. Titus ii. 11 Heb. ii. 9. 2 Peter iii. 9.

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which the connexion with the present inquiry is not very immediate. I confine myself to those which express in general terms the design of the atonement. Those which I now omit, and which involve other principles of explanation, may be noticed again before I close.

§ 11. There can be no question, that in these texts the terms in which the extent of the atonement is stated *are* very general and unqualified. The question at present is, Does it necessarily follow from such representations of the atonement, that *all are actually pardoned?* And, before proceeding to consider the principles on which the texts themselves ought to be explained, I have two remarks to make in answer to this question. The *first* is, that to interpret them as necessarily implying universal pardon, is to set them in direct, and, in my judgment, irreconcilable variance with the many passages of scripture, formerly quoted and illustrated, in which it is so plainly and explicitly affirmed that pardon is *not* universal; a consideration which will possess strength, in different minds, proportioned to the degree in which they may have felt the relevancy and the force of those passages. The *second* is, that if from such passages the inference be legitimate that all are *pardoned*, it must be equally legitimate that all are *saved*. If because Christ is said to have died for all, it follows that all without exception must actually be partakers of the end for which he died, upon what principle can this be restricted to pardon? Was pardon the whole of the end for which Christ died? Certainly not. The end was *salvation*. What, then, is to be made of such a declaration as—"God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved?" Here is the universal term, and it is connected, not with being pardoned merely, but with being saved. Is every one in the world, then,

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actually saved? It will not do to say in reply, that being saved is here opposed to being condemned, and therefore has respect to pardon: for this would be to identify pardon and salvation; whereas, upon the scheme we are opposing, the two are essentially distinct, all being pardoned, while the great majority are not saved. I cannot, for my own part, see any way in which the doctrine of *universal pardon* can be maintained from such passages, and the doctrine of *universal salvation* be denied. In as far as the foundation for the former is alleged to consist in the universality of the terms which express the design of the Saviour's mission and death, the foundation must be equally valid for the latter. "I came," says Jesus, "not to judge the world, but to save the world." Every individual in the world shall be judged by him, when he does come to judge the world. Is the salvation, then, which was effected by him when he came to save, as extensive as the judgment is to be when he comes to judge?—"The Son of man is come," says he again, "to save that which was lost." The whole race was lost:—is the whole race, then, actually and individually saved? This is not pretended. And in this the system appears very inconsistent with itself.

The case stands thus. We have before us a number of passages, in which the propitiation made by the death of Christ is spoken of in terms of universality,—as embracing all men,—the world,—the whole world.—But on the other hand, we have a larger number of passages, in which we are assured that all are not pardoned, that all are not saved, in virtue of its merits. A specimen of these I have adduced in the former part of this Essay. I must now add to them those passages, in which the atonement of Christ is represented in terms of limitation and restriction, as designed for *some only*. They are such as these:—"Thou shalt call his name

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Jesus; for he shall *save his people* from their sins:"—"Feed *the church of God, which* he hath purchased with his own blood;"—"Christ also *loved the church, and gave himself for it*, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water through the word; that he might present it unto himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish;"—"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for *the sheep*."—"For the transgression of *my people* was he stricken:"—"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant *justify many;* for he shall bear *their* iniquities:"—"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of *God's elect?* Shall God who justifieth? Who is he that condemneth? Shall *Christ who died*, yea rather who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession *for us*?"*—These, along with various passages in which the phrases *for us* and *for our sins* are shown by the context to have immediate reference to believers, evidently speak of the design of Christ's coming, and work, and death, in terms that appear at least to confine it to those who are actually made partakers, by divine grace, of its entire benefit.—Such, then, being the plain state of the fact; the question comes to be,—is there any principle of harmony between these apparently contrary classes of texts? It is easy to give an array of passages on one side; and it is equally easy to meet it with an array of passages on the other side. But the point at which we ought humbly to aim, not with contemptous dogmatism, but with a proper sense of the difficulty, is to discover

* Matt. i. 21. Acts xx 28. Eph. v. 25—27. John x. 11. Isa. liii. 8, 11. Rom. viii. 33, 34.

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the general principle according to which both can be explained without putting either to torture, and the whole—I was going to say, reduced to consistency and harmony; but this might seem to imply existing incongruity and confusion,—I would rather say, the consistency and harmony of the whole made manifest.

§ 12. In inquiring, then, after this principle of harmony, I must begin with avowing, that, ever since I was able to think at all upon such subjects, I have felt myself far from satisfied with a common way of interpreting some of those texts which express the extent of the atonement in universal terms, by means of a convenient supplement. According to this method of explanation, *the world* is, in such occurrences of it, made to signify *the elect world*, the word *elect* being inserted as a supplement, conceived to be necessary for the consistency of scripture. *An elect world*, indeed, has become a phrase in common use with a particular class of commentators and divines, and from them, among private Christians of the same *caste;* being employed with as much matter-of-course freedom as if it actually had the sanction of ordinary usage in the Sacred Volume. But it is not to be found there. It belongs to human systems merely. Any system, however, that requires such means to save its credit, must be considered as in straits. The supplement is too arbitrary; and while it solves one difficulty, or rather conveniently cuts a knot which it is felt hard to loose, it involves us in other difficulties, equal, if not greater, in regard both to doctrine, and to principles of interpretation. I object to it on two grounds, besides its apparent arbitrariness. It is in itself *forced and unnatural*, and it makes the sacred penmen, in some instances, write *inconsistently and absurdly*.

In the first place, it is in itself forced and unnatu-

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ral. I mean by this, that it is, *a priori*, most unlikely, that the term *world* should ever be used to designate *the elect*. It sometimes denotes the habitable globe, the residence of mankind;—sometimes mankind at large, the inhabitants of the globe;—these are senses of the word about which there is no dispute, and no room for any. There is a third application of it which is peculiar to scripture phraseology, but so frequent, and so marked there, as to be equally out of the range of debate;—it signifies the great mass of mankind, as distinguished from the people of God. For example: "The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil:"—"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you:"—"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one."* The occurrence of the word in this sense, indeed, considering how small the proportion was then, and ever has been, which the children of God have borne to the mass of mankind, is quite natural. But, on this very account, I cannot but consider it as in a high degree unnatural and improbable, that it should at the same time signify the very opposite of this;—that the same term which is so currently used to signify the great majority of mankind in distinction from the select number or small minority, should, at the same time, by the same writers, be used as a designation of the smaller number, of a character directly contrary, in distinction from the

* John vii. 7. xv. 19. 1 John v. 18, 19.

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majority or the mass! The unreasonableness of this in itself has ever appeared to me to constitute a strong ground of previous unlikelihood that it should be so.

Secondly. The previous improbability is strengthened to certainty, when I consider how *inconsistently* and *absurdly* this supposed acceptation of the term makes the sacred writers express themselves. I must give an instance or two of what I mean. In John iii. 16. our Saviour says—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." It surely will not be questioned by any one pretending, I do not say to critical knowledge, but even to common understanding, that in this sentence the word "*whosoever*" (or *every one who—πας ὁ*) has less extent of meaning than the more comprehensive word "the world," which precedes it. It restricts and limits this comprehensive term. It signifies—whosoever *of the world.* Suppose, then, the world, to mean *the elect world*, or, more shortly, for it is the same thing, *the elect*, what kind of statement will this produce?—"God so loved the elect world, or the elect, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever *of the elect*—namely—believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life!" This is sheer absurdity. Yet I do not see what else can be made of the verse, if "the world" really signifies the world of the elect.

Again:—in John xvii. 9. Jesus says, in addressing his Father—"I pray for them; *I pray not for the world*, but for them which thou hast given me." But, in the 21st verse, it has been alleged by Arminians, he *does* pray for the world:—in expressing his desire for the union of his people, he says—"that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us—

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that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Now, without considering at present the design of Arminians in this, I wish the reader to observe what some Calvinists have said in reply. They have actually understood "the world," in this last occurrence of it, to mean *the elect*—God's chosen people scattered throughout all nations, and the prayer as a petition that *they* might, all of them, in successive generations, be brought to the knowledge and faith of his name. In this way, it is alleged, the two verses are at once reconciled. And so, undoubtedly, they are; but the reconciliation, as it appears to me, is effected at the expense of every principle of fair and rational criticism, by making the same term signify, first one thing, repeatedly, and in direct and specified discrimination from another,—and then, all at once, and without warning, the very thing from which it had been distinguished; and that, not only in remote parts of the same prayer, but in the very same sentence. In verses 9. 14. 16. 18. 21. 23. 25. "*the world*" is used in express distinction from the chosen people of God, and the distinction is absolutely marked in the very verse in which it is supposed to signify that chosen people—"that *they also may be one* in us that *the world may believe* that thou has sent me." So that this extraordinary principle of interpretation makes those whose union was to be the means of conviction, and the world who were to be convinced by it, one and the same! This will never do. Nor is there the least occasion for having recourse to any process so anomalous. The principle of interpretation is simple. In the explanation just given, it is assumed, that the phrase "*that the world may believe*," can mean nothing less than that those signified by "the world," whosoever they were, should all individually be brought to true and saving faith. But the prayer is for the unity of his

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disciples; and, things being spoken of according to their proper tendencies, this unity is sought, *as an evidence to the world* of his divine mission. This is all. The *tendency* of all evidence is to produce conviction. And, in all cases, the general *design* of every one by whom evidence is presented, must be the same. It must correspond with the tendency. It must be to convince. Such is the tendency, and such we are warranted to consider the design, of all the evidence of the gospel, or of the mission of Christ, and the truth of his doctrines. The petition under consideration is framed, in its expression, upon this simple principle; meaning no more than that in the love and union of his disciples the world might have evidence of the truth, such as should *tend*, like all evidence, whether the effect actually resulted or not, to the production of faith—to the conviction of his having come from God. And this is not the only text, to the explanation of which this simple principle, of things being spoken of according to their general tendency, is the key. In John v. 34. Jesus says, "I receive not testimony from man; but these things I say, *that ye might be saved.*" No one is so foolish as to suppose him, in these words, to express an absolute purpose that by what he was saying every individual of those who were at the time his hearers should be brought to salvation. No: but in the context he argues in support of his divine commission. He appeals to the testimony of the Baptist, and, in connexion with this appeal, he tells his hearers—"these things I say that ye might be saved." He then proceeds to make the same appeal to the attestations borne to him by the works which the Father had given him to finish, and more directly still by the Father himself; to all which the language was equally applicable. All was fitted for awakening, convincing, and subduing to God, the minds and hearts of those who heard him. He ex-

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presses the general tendency and end of all the evidence produced by him. The same is clearly the meaning when it is said, in John i. 7. and said, too, of the testimony of the Baptist, "The same came for a witness, to bear testimony to the light, *that all through him might believe.*" Such was the tendency and the design of John's testimony. Who will say that all, or all men, here means the elect? —Indeed, this principle of speaking of things according to their proper tendency, and of that tendency as indicative of the state of the divine mind, is far from unusual in the scriptures. "Despisest thou," says Paul, "the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering, not knowing that *the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*"* The words are expressive of the proper tendency of the divine goodness—the effect which it *ought* to have on the minds of men; and this tendency is regarded as corresponding with the general gracious *end* of God in the exercise of his long suffering, in sparing them, bearing with them, bestowing upon them the gifts of his bounty, and setting before them, and urging upon their attention, the offers and invitations of his grace. This is one at least of the senses in which Peter's words also are to be understood—"and account that the long suffering of our Lord is salvation;"—and every attentive reader of the scriptures must be struck with the perfectly unembarrassed freedom with which every thing is there spoken of on the principle that its native tendency, when that tendency is to good, is to be considered as the index of the divine intention in it—irrespectively of all secret purposes of the divine mind. The language of the scriptures is framed upon this principle, just as if such pur-

* Rom. ii. 4.

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poses had no existence. They do not seem at all to affect it.

§ 13. Yet they do exist. It by no means follows, from any thing now said, that God never uses more than outward moral means for the conviction and conversion of sinners, and that there is no such thing as the exercise of his sovereign efficacious grace. I must disbelieve the plainest testimonies of his word, before I can think so. The change that takes place in the conversion of a sinner, is represented under the figures of a new birth, a resurrection from the dead, a new creation. As these are divine works, so is conversion. I enter not on the extensive field of discussion connected with the doctrine of *election*. It would fairly demand a treatise for itself. I shall not attempt to apply the line of my wisdom to sound those awful depths which have been found unfathomable by lines much longer than mine. But I take the simple testimonies of the word of God. They seem to me frequent and explicit; and, moreover, to be in beautiful harmony with some of the fundamental principles of the gospel. I see, for example, that the gospel is constructed, throughout, upon the principle of excluding all boasting, and leaving to the sinner nothing in himself whereof to glory; I see this written as with a sunbeam. It is a scheme of free mercy. Grace, from first to last, is its essential element. Boasting is excluded from the *ground of hope*:—for that is nothing of the sinner's, but exclusively the finished work of the Redeemer. But this is not enough. It would be altogether incongruous, that boasting should be excluded in this department, and room be left for it in another. It must be excluded, also, in regard to the cause of difference between one sinner who receives the gospel, and another who rejects it. If I have in myself the cause of this difference, I have whereof

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to glory; I have in myself, in fact, the proximate cause of my salvation. If it has been in consequence of any better disposition of mine that I have embraced the Saviour, while another continues to refuse him—if I have thus "made myself to differ"—I have in that better disposition "whereof to glory." The theory of *common grace*—or grace bestowed equally on all, to be by all improved—alters not, in this respect, the nature of the case. The question still recurs, how comes one to improve this grace, and not another? Is the disposition that inclines him to do so his own—inherent in his nature, or self-produced? It is manifest, that it is not to the common grace that the difference is to be imputed, but to the better disposition to improve it. Whence, then, this disposition? Is it, or is it not, the effect of *divine influence?* The doctrine of election seems to me, in a very great measure, to hinge on this simple question of fact. Is the first truly gracious movement of the soul towards God the effect, or not, of divine influence?—I am satisfied that it must, because, if it be true that "the carnal mind is enmity against God," this enmity can never, without an extraneous influence, change itself, or choose to love. However mysterious the nature of the influence, and however suddenly, or however slowly, and even imperceptibly, it may be exerted, the change must have its beginning from God. I am satisfied that it must, because, if it has been originated by myself, then I have in myself the cause of the difference between me and others, and, in having this, have reason for self-glorying; whereas, the plainest declarations of the word of God, and the whole genius and constitution of the gospel, tell me I am to have nothing of the kind. I am satisfied that it must, because, if I could begin the good work, I could carry it on. We have seen by what figures the spiritual change

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is represented. If, then, I can create, I can uphold; if I can make alive, I can keep alive; if I can produce the vital principle, I can sustain, and cherish, and perfect the life. These things cannot be. I must not have it to say to the God of my salvation, that I began with him, and not he with me. "In him," spiritually as well as physically, I must live, and move, and have my being." Yes, thou God of all grace,

> "From the first breath of life divine,
> Down to my last expiring hour,
> The gracious work must all be thine,
> Begun and finish'd in thy power!"

But, if it be so—if the first gracious movement of the soul towards God is, and must be, the effect of divine influence, we are, instantly and irresistibly, led to the doctrine of election. For surely it will not be denied, that whatever God does he previously intended to do:—and, if there was an intention the moment before to put forth his gracious influence, when was that intention formed? We cannot, with regard to any divine intention, consistently stop short of eternity:—and the eternity of this intention is election.

I am a believer in election, moreover, because I am unable to imagine, that the God of infinite wisdom could contrive and carry into execution the whole of the stupendous—the divinely stupendous scheme, of the incarnation, sufferings, and death of his own Son, and then leave the whole to a mere peradventure whether it should have any result in the salvation of even a single soul:—nay, to less than a peradventure;—for, if the scripture account of human nature, as in a state of enmity against God, be a true account, there must have been a moral certainty of its having none. For with regard to the theory of common or universal grace, I

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must insist upon it that it makes no difference in the present question; it being, to all intents and purposes, the very same thing, whether we speak of a sinner choosing directly to love, and fear, and serve God, or of his choosing to improve the grace supposed to be given to him, in common with others, for that purpose. The principle of the choice is perfectly the same. There are various other points of light in which this doctrine might be placed; but I must forbear, else my Essay, already much longer than I anticipated, will swell to a volume.

§ 14. To me, then, it appears, that in providing the atonement there was, in the contemplation of the divine mind, a double object. There was an object pertaining to the general administration of his government as the *moral Ruler of the world*,—and an object of a more special kind, belonging to the distribution of his favours as a *sovereign Benefactor*: and there is, in correspondence with this twofold purpose, a general and a peculiar love.—I have endeavoured to show, that when our Saviour says, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life"—*the world* cannot be understood in any restricted acceptation, but evidently signifies the whole world of mankind, —the race of men in general. Here, therefore, we have a declaration from the lips of the Redeemer himself, that his own mediation is to be regarded as a glorious manifestation, on the part of the Godhead, of *love to man*,—a display of benevolence and grace towards this race of apostate creatures, this revolted province of his general Empire. And in this light it is represented by the single word which the Apostle Paul applies to it, when, in writing to Titus, he says—"After that the kindness and *love of God our Saviour toward man* appeared"—the PHILANTHROPY of God our Saviour!—The word of God

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informs us of another description of fallen creatures besides men,—a superior order of immortal intelligences, who "kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation;" for whom, however, the divine benevolence, for reasons unrevealed and about which, therefore, conjecture is idle and presumptuous, has not been pleased to provide any means of deliverance. He has set his love on man. He has chosen our world as the theatre for the display of his infinite mercy; and has expended here the fulness of his grace. It is the human, and not the angelic nature, that he has assumed into union with divine; and he has assumed it, to work salvation, not for angels, but for men. No deputation of the spirits of light was ever commissioned to wing their way to the realms of darkness and despair, to proclaim to their fallen compeers the glad tidings of mercy. No "multitude of the heavenly host" ever burst upon those gloomy abodes in the brightness of their celestial splendour, and hymned, with raptured harmony, the joyful song —"Glory to God in the highest, peace in *hell*, good will towards *devils!*" That song was reserved for our world. The peace is on *earth;* the good will towards *men*. The Saviour by whom glory is brought to God in the highest is "the Son of man;" and they are the children of men, whom "he is not ashamed to call his brethren."—It is in this sense, then, that God has "loved the world"—The grand manifestation of his "delight in mercy" has had earth for its theatre, and man for its object.—The scheme in which he has embarked the glory of his Name, has been a scheme of grace to the fallen family of Adam.

In this view of it, the object of the atonement is general. I regard the mediation of Christ as a grand public manifestation of "the righteousness of God," by which the claims of justice are, in the spirit of them, fully satisfied, and the glory of this attribute thus maintained, in the exercise of mercy:

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—as a *general remedy*, admitting *according to the divine pleasure and purpose*, of a *particular application*. The distinction, which Mr. Erskine, in his last publication, passes over with such general brevity of remark, is, notwithstanding, a highly important one—the distinction, I mean, between the *sufficiency* of any remedy, and its *efficiency*. The former arises from the nature of the remedy itself; the latter depends on its being applied. The former, therefore, may even be infinite, while the latter is purposely limited. The blood of Christ may be infinite in its atoning *value*, and yet limited in its atoning *efficacy*;—*sufficient* for the salvation of *all*, and yet effectual to the salvation of *some* only.—The place for *election*, in this statement, lies, it will be perceived, in the *application* of the remedy. I have formerly stated my objections to the notion of *exact equivalent*, in the atonement, for the punishment due to the sins of a certain number,—that is, of the elect.

I am a firm believer, as I have said, in the doctrine of election. But election, I apprehend, does not at all proceed on any such principle as that of a *stipulated exact equivalent* for their sufferings in the sufferings of the Mediator. The atonement, in this respect, left the divine Being at perfect liberty to pardon whom he would; only, in every case in which he does pardon, he bestows the blessing, in consequence of the atonement, honourably to his righteousness.

It is in bestowing the blessing that he exercises his *sovereignty*. "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion." This is what I have called his special or peculiar love. It is, in every instance, his grace that gives the general remedy its particular application, or personal efficiency,—and *the previous purpose* (which must of course be conceived of as *eternal*) *to give it this application and efficiency*,—*is* ELECTION.

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In regard, then, to its sufficiency, and to the *rectoral design* of God, as moral Governor, that the offer of salvation should be freely made to mankind at large on the ground of it, we consider the atonement as for all, for all men,—for the world, for the whole world. On the other hand, those passages which represent its object more restrictedly, which speak of Christ as dying for *the Church*, for *the sheep*, and to save *his people* from their sins, may surely be considered as having an interpretation sufficiently appropriate, when they are understood as intimating God's peculiar purpose in regard to his elect,—the purpose, namely, of giving actual saving efficiency in their case to the great general remedy, by a special application of it to their souls, in fulfilment of a sovereign determination formed in the counsels of eternity.—But with these secret purposes of God, sinners have nothing to do in hearing the gospel, nor the servants of God in preaching it. The Gospel testimony holds forth the atonement as actually made; the assurance is proclaimed to all of the divine acceptance of it and satisfaction in it; and sinners universally are invited to pardon and life on the ground of it, encouraged by God's own intimation of his readiness to receive, and bless, and save all who come to Him in the name of his Son. There is a sufficiency in the atonement for all; and on this ground the language of invitation is as free and untrammelled as if there were no such thing as any secret purpose of God in existence. In preaching the gospel, we are more than warranted, it is our incumbent duty, to frame our addresses on the same principle. God's purposes are the rule of his own procedure; but, being entirely beyond the sphere of our knowledge, they are not, and cannot, be the rule of ours. It is easy to get out of our depth on almost any subject: on no one is it more easy than on the divine decrees. I seem to hear a variety of meta-

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physicial questions and puzzles coming upon my ear, and pressing for a reply. But the Bible is not given us to teach us metaphysics; nor, blessed be God! is a metaphysical head necessary to understand it:—"Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." An humble docility of spirit is one of the first requisites to the discernment of divine truth. Under the divine teaching promised to believing prayer, a babe may comprehend, what a philosopher, who scorns to ask the promised illumination, may misconceive and pervert to his destruction.

Although I conceive this view of the atonement, as a *general remedy* with a *particular application*, to be an incomparably more simple principle of harmony between the two classes of apparently discordant texts, than that which is obtained by putting a meaning so unnatural, as the ordinary view requires, on universal terms; I do not intend by this to say, that it is the sole principle of interpretation, in every one of the passages where such universal terms occur. I have already adverted to another, which may perhaps be justly applicable to other texts than the one I have used it to explain,—namely, the established canon of criticism, according to which such terms derive their extent of import from the subject of which the author is writing. This is a rule so obvious, and so necessary to the understanding of all writings, profane as well as sacred, and even of ordinary conversation, that there can be no dispute about its soundness; the only difference of opinion that can be supposed is about the instances in which it has place. Into the discussion of particular texts, however, I shall not enter, but leave the principle, thus suggested, and formerly exemplified in one case, to be applied by the reader's judgment.

§ 15. There is another principle still, on which a

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few remarks may be offered. It is one, which we should very naturally expect to find influencing, to no small extent, the phraseology of the New Testament. It arises from the peculiar state of things before the coming of Christ and the introduction of the New Testament dispensation. The knowledge of the true God and of his salvation, and the possession of spiritual privileges, and blessings, and hopes, were then in a great degree, almost entirely indeed, limited to the one people of Israel. Under the new dispensation, there was to be a general extension of these to men of "every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." This was to be one of the distinguishing features of the new era,—one of the most remarkable differences between it and the one which had preceded it. No reader of the Acts of the Apostles, and of the Apostolic epistles, can have failed to remark the frequency with which this change is spoken of and alluded to. Can any thing, then, be more natural, than that, when the designs of God by the gospel are the subject, such phrases as *all men* and *the world* should be used to signify *men in general, men of all nations, men without difference;* that they should be meant to convey the grand New Testament principle, that "there is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free,"—"no difference between the Jew and the Gentile, the same Lord over all being rich unto all that call upon him."—Nothing is more common, than to use a general designation, when that which is affirmed is not true of each individual included in the designation, but when the truth of it respecting even a small number *ascertains or illustrates a general principle.* Thus, when the Christians "of the circumcision" who were at Jerusalem, after hearing Peter rehearse the circumstances of his mission to Cornelius, exclaimed with submission of spirit to the divine will, and hearts expand-

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ing with new wonder and joy, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life;" they did not mean that this blessing had been actually bestowed upon every individual of the Gentile world. But in the case of Cornelius, a principle was ascertained. They then saw clearly the mind of God, that thenceforward, under the reign of the Messiah, the spiritual administration of his grace, they were to "know no man after the flesh." They now understood, how it was that, according to the Saviour's commission, "repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem;" and that "the Gentiles were to be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promise in Christ by the gospel."—In the same way, then, as in the language of the believing Jews on their hearing of Peter's vision and its consequences, "*the Gentiles*" do not mean all the Gentiles individually, but the rest of mankind generally, as distinguished from the Jews; so "*the world*" and "*all men*" may be interpreted as meaning, not all the descendants of Adam individually considered, but the race regarded generally,—not men *singly* and *without exception*, but men *collectively* and *without difference*.

In attempting the application of this principle to one passage, its suitableness to some others will at the same time appear. The passage to which I refer is one of considerable difficulty, not as to the great general truths which it is evidently intended to convey, but in regard to the precise amount of some parts of its phraseology. It is, Rom. v. 12—21. "For as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; even so death passed upon all men, for that all sinned. For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after

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the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also [is] the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, [which is] by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as [it was] by one that sinned, [so is] the gift; for the judgment [was] by one to condemnation, but the free gift [is] of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one: much more they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one [judgment came] upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [the free gift came] upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."—I have retained our English translation of the passage, with the single exception of rendering the καὶ, in the twelfth verse, *even* instead of *and*; which I have done, for the sake of avoiding a long and very indefinite parenthesis. To enter into minute criticism on the terms and structure of the original, would only divert the reader's mind from my present object.

The Apostle, in this passage, runs a parallel in some points, and a contrast in others, between Adam and Christ. The principal point of parallelism consists in the *public capacity*, sustained by both, respectively, and in the resulting of consequences to others, corresponding to the part acted

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by each in that capacity,—from the transgression of the first Adam, and from the obedience of the second.—Now, in tracing this parallelism, the chief difficulty lies in ascertaining the import of those phrases by which the extent of the injury from the former, and of the benefit from the latter, is here expressed. The undeniable fact is, that the two are expressed by the very same terms:—"Therefore, as by the offence of one [judgment came] upon *all men* (πανταϛ ανθρωπουϛ) to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one [the free gift came] upon *all men* (πανταϛ ανθρωπουϛ) unto justification of life. For as by one man's obedience *many* (ὁι πολλοι, the many) were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall *many* (ὁι πολλοι, the many) be made righteous."—Now surely, if there can be found a principle of interpretation, which admits of these phrases being understood on both sides with the same extent of meaning, it should bid fair to be the true one; in as much as it cannot in candour be denied, that such agreement is greatly more simple and natural, than explaining the very same phrases with a latitude of meaning so much larger on the one side than on the other, as the ordinary Calvinistic exposition requires. I do not mean to deny the substantial truth of that exposition; but it does not seem to me easy and natural to consider "all men" and "the many," as *directly signifying*, on the one side, all Adam's natural seed, and, on the other, all Christ's spiritual seed,—that is, the two seeds, or bodies, of which they are understood to have been respectively the representatives. If my interpretation shall be found to come ultimately to much the same thing, yet it is, I think, with less force put upon the direct import of the terms.

The supporters of universal pardon conceive that they find a satisfactory principle of interpretation in harmony with these observations, by explaining

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the curse as including only temporal death, or the dissolution of soul and body. Understand it so, they allege, and all is perfectly simple. All die in Adam—all are made alive in Christ:—the resurrection which frees from the grave is to be as universal as the death which consigns to it:—the death came by the first Adam; the resurrection comes by the second: it is the death of all; it is the resurrection of all. I grant that this sounds plausible—plausible from its seeming simplicity. I have already, however, stated objections to it, such as are, in my judgment, altogether insurmountable. I cannot resume them; but I may add to them one more. It appears to me impossible, without the most flagrant outrage on all just principles of interpretation, that the phraseology of the passage itself, especially when compared with that of scripture generally, in regard to the benefits resulting from the obedience of the second Adam, can be understood as limited to the mere resurrection of the body from the grave, irrespectively of the eternal life of happpiness succeeding it; or that the various expressions can, with any consistency or truth, be applied to *all mankind*, considered individually, and without exception. "The free gift"—"the gift by grace"—"justification"—and "justification of life," as opposed to "judgment," and "condemnation"—"receiving the abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, and reigning in life by one, Jesus Christ;"—these are expressions which are evidently employed with the same extent of application as to the recipients of the blessings signified by them. For, even as to the last of them: "receiving the abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness," corresponds to what is called, in the fifteenth verse, "the grace of God, and the gift by grace which is by one man Jesus Christ"—and that grace and gift are there declared to have

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"abounded unto *many*," εἰς τοὺς πολλοὺς—unto *the many*; so that all who are meant by "the many," must "reign in life by Jesus Christ." Now, the question is, can such expressions be interpreted as fulfilled in all mankind individually, or as having their import exhausted in the mere resurrection of the body from the grave? Is "the free gift"—"the gift of God"—"the gift by grace," to be restricted to this, and considered as partaken alike by all men without exception? Assuredly not. The *death* to which sin has reigned is, in the 21st verse, contrasted with the *life* to which grace has reigned; and the life is "eternal life," a phrase which no one can misunderstand who carefully reads his Bible; and the closing verse of the following chapter teaches us that this "eternal life" is "the gift of God," and the "gift by grace"—"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." The "death" which is here pronounced to be the "wages of sin," cannot mean temporal death; not merely because in the verse it stands in contrast with eternal life; but because, in the verses preceding, it is represented as "*the end*" of the service of sin, in opposition to everlasting life as "*the end*" of the service of God, and of righteousness:—"What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for *the end* of those things is *death*. But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and *the end, everlasting life*." Now, temporal death, every reader must perceive, is equally the end of both services; both terminating in the grave. The death, then, which is declared to be the end of the former service, must be something beyond it. It must denote the *final state* of those who serve sin, as the eternal life denotes the *final state* of those who serve God;—that is, it must be

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the second, or eternal death. Again: is "justification," and "justification of life," no more than such a pardon as all receive—a pardon such as releases the body from the grave, and then leaves body and soul together, in by far the larger number of instances, to everlasting perdition? Is this being justified?—justified unto life! And how is it in any way true of *all men*, if understood to mean individually, and without exception, that having "received abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, they shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ?"—Is there, in short, any scriptural sense, or even any sense at all, in which such things can possibly be affirmed of all men? There certainly is none. The Scriptures, while they affirm that "he who believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life," and "shall not come into condemnation," testify with no less explicitness, that "he that believeth not is condemned already"—"shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him;" that "he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life"—that "the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience."

Taking these observations on the phraseology of this important passage in connexion with our former general reasonings, we are confirmed in setting aside the principle of interpretation which assumes temporal death to be the amount of the curse consequent on Adam's sin. Is there, then, any other principle, according to which the phrases used on either side may be taken in the same extent of meaning, and yet the truth of the parallel be maintained? I think there is; and that it is to be found in the simple distinction between all men *without exception*, and all men *without difference*. Let us see how this will do

First. There can be no question that the words

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all, and *all men*, are frequently used in this sense—used, that is, when that which is affirmed is *not* true of all men without exception, but *is* true of all men without difference. I select two examples out of many. In John xii. 32. Jesus says, anticipating the triumphs of his cross—"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all men* unto me." The words were used in reply to the request of "*certain Greeks*," who had come up to worship at one of the Jewish feasts, that they might be introduced to him; and this very circumstance gives a key, if a key were necessary, to their meaning. They were not true of all men without exception; but they were of all without difference. Jesus has not drawn to him all men in the former sense; but he has drawn to him, without discrimination, men of every people, and kindred, and nation, and tongue, his gospel being designed not for Jews only, but for "all the families of the earth." In 1 Tim. ii. 4. Paul says of "God our Saviour"—"Who will have *all men* to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." It is clear that the two clauses of this verse must be co-extensive. He who wills the salvation of all men, wills also that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth. The meaning can only be, that his salvation is designed for men indiscriminately, and his truth for universal diffusion, and universal influence. The context, indeed, (as candid interpreters on all sides of theological questions have admitted,) evidently favours the explanation of *all men* as meaning *men of all sorts*, of every rank and condition; verses 1—4. "I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who

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will have all men" (men of all ranks and descrip tions alike) "to be saved, and to come to the know ledge of the truth."*

Secondly. I am, at the same time, satisfied that the parallelism between Adam and Christ ought to be understood as having reference to the *really efficacious influence* of their respective actings,—of the transgression of the former, and the obedience of the latter. All is, otherwise, pointless and unsatisfactory.—It is true, that the *declaration* of the righteousness of the second Adam is made, in the preaching of the gospel, much more extensively than its saving benefit is actually conferred. But still, even as to the declaration of it, we are, in point of fact, under the necessity of limiting; in as much as, even in this view, the "all men," when taken strictly, is far more extensive than the truth of the case. We are obliged to consider the phrase as meaning, not all men without exception, (for millions at this day have never heard of it,) but all men without distinction; according to his statement in a preceding part of the Epistle, which is, at the same time, in harmony with the current phraseology of his writings—"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to *every one* that believeth, *to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*"† —Seeing, then, we are, at all events, necessitated to limit,—there being, as we have seen, no sense, recognised by scripture, in which all men without exception are delivered from the curse,—there being, in point of fact, even amongst those to whom the gospel comes, a vast majority whom it fails to profit,—and there being a larger majority still of the whole race to

* See also John i. 7. Acts xvii. 30, 31. Eph. iii. 9. Titus ii. 11, &c.

† Chap. i. 16.

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whom it has never come,—seeing, I say, that we *must* limit, the limitation ought, in all reason, to be made, in consistency with the scope and connexion of the passage, and the purpose or purposes of the writer. This, then, leads me to observe—

Thirdly. The view given, by considering the universal phrases in the sense I have suggested, accords remarkably well with the Apostle's object. The Jews "made their boast in the law." They looked on "sinners of Gentiles" as lying under God's curse, simply because they were not of the chosen people, and because they were "without law."—But the Apostle shows his deluded and high-minded countrymen, that there was a lineage more remote than that of Abraham, a lineage common to them with the Gentiles,—Gentile and Jew alike having descended from the same original progenitor;—that there must have been a law before the Mosaic, by the transgression of which death had been incurred,—death, although the penalty of guilt, having reigned from Adam to Moses, as well as subsequently; that the connexion of all, Jews as well as Gentiles, with the fall of the first man, was the same; and that all, the one as well as the other, were equally involved in its consequences. He shows them, on the one hand, that "by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men," not upon the Gentile only, but equally upon the Jew, "unto condemnation,"—that in this respect there is *no difference;* and in like manner, on the other, that "by the righteousness of one the free gift comes upon all men" *without difference*, upon Jew and Gentile alike, "unto justification of life;"—in a word, that in the offer, and (what he has here more especially in view) in the effectual bestowment of divine grace by the gospel, "there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek,"—between "Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free."

Fourthly. It is very true, and I am not forgetting

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it, that, on the one side of the comparison, the death and the curse do actually, in point of fact, come upon all men *without exception*. But this is no sufficient evidence of its being necessarily in this sense that the comparison is instituted. If, when a parallel is drawn, and the same terms are used on both sides of it, there be two senses in which these terms may be understood, and the question is, which is the true one; it is surely a fair principle of decision, that if, when understood in one of the senses, there is one side of the parallel to which they cannot, without unnatural straining, be applied, while, when taken in the other, they are, with equal truth, and equal simplicity, predicable of both, and at the same time the parallelism expressed is equally to the purpose of the writer, the latter should be adopted as the preferable acceptation. Thus, I think, the case stands in the instance before us. All men *without exception* is true on the one side of the parallel, but it is not true on the other; all men *without difference* is equally true on both; and the sense produced by so understanding it, is remarkably suitable to the object of the writer, and the general scope of his discourse. Ought it not, then, on this simple principle, to have the preference? And that this *is* the point of parallelism which the apostle intends, we have strong evidence in a preceding part to the epistle. I refer to chap. iii. 22—24. "For there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely, by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Here, the reader will observe, we have in the 23d verse the unlimited term ALL used, in a connexion where it may with truth be understood as meaning *without exception*; for what proposition is more exceptionless, in regard to the children of men, than that "all have sinned?" Yet that the really intended and equally true meaning is,

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all men *without difference*—is clear from what immediately follows in the 24th verse—"being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;"—for, were we to carry forward the universal term *all*, in the sense of all *without exception*, we should have a statement contradictory to palpable fact—namely, that all who have sinned are actually made partakers of justifying grace; and that too, although the justification is in the very same sentence declared to be by faith in the propitiatory blood of Christ. To show this, it is only necessary to bring the verses together. "There is no difference; for *all have sinned*, and come short of the glory of God; *being justified* freely by his grace." The meaning evidently is, that all, *without difference*, who *are* justified, are justified in the same way—that is, "freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;" that the Jew cannot be justified otherwise than the Gentile, and that, according to the gospel, the blessing was equally free to the Gentile as to the Jew. And to confirm this view still farther, we have only to look forward to the verses which follow:—verses 28—30. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes; of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God, who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith:"—that is, who shall justify Jew and Gentile, without difference, in the same way.

§ 16. But the advocates of universal pardon allege, and that in no qualified terms, that no other scheme of doctrine holds out sufficient encouragement to sinners to return to God. To this charge I would answer by observing—

First. If we hold out the same encouragement that is held out in God's own word, we hold out

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enough. To hold out either less or more, would be alike presumptuous. The terms of divine invitation have been formerly quoted:—"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he *will have mercy upon him*, and to our God, for he *will abundantly pardon*."* And with this style of invitation the entire Bible is in harmony. Can any one passage be pointed out, in which the inspired servants of God, when addressing his message to unbelieving sinners, do more than this?—any one passage, in which they encourage sinners to return, by the inducement that their sins are already pardoned? Let it be pointed out, and we shall add it to the invitations we have been accustomed to use.

Secondly. Is there, indeed, no encouragement, or no sufficient encouragement, for sinners, when we can tell them of a God who "delighteth in mercy"—standing ready, with the outstretched arms of his love, to receive, to pardon, and to bless them?—when we can tell them, that, in the exercise of his infinite and everlasting mercy, such an atonement has been made for sin, that on the ground of it he can extend forgiveness, freely and fully, to the chief of transgressors, in a way glorifying to all the perfections of his character, and to all the claims of his government?—that every obstacle which obstructed the sinner's approach has thus been taken out of the way, and all made more than welcome to his presence and his favour, to pardon, and blessing, and life, who will only come to him, renouncing the claims of a proud self-sufficiency, and willing to be "debtors to mercy alone?"—Is

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*. Isa. lv. 6, 7.

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this no encouragement? On the contrary, could encouragement more ample be desired? Would it be no encouragement to a child who had rebelled against his father, thrown off his authority, and slighted his kindness, to be assured, by the most certain information, and the most satisfactory tokens, that his justly offended parent only waited his return, with more than readiness to receive him;—that there needed but his coming, with confession of his sin, and submission to free clemency, to his finding an immediate and joyful acceptance, a cancelling of all his trespasses, and a place anew in his father's love? Would it have been no encouragement to the spirit of the prodigal, when, taught by its wretched consequences the folly and the wickedness of his course, he "came to himself," to have known fully the state of his father's heart towards him, which, when he *did* come, he so happily experienced? In that Father we see GOD—represented as thus ready to receive, graciously and with delight, his returning children, to blot out all their offences, and give them a name and a place in his house. And is *this* no encouragement?

Thirdly. Is it not precisly the *kind* of encouragement, which, if the expression be not too bold, sinners *ought* to have? In any thing beyond it, there is, to my mind, the appearance at least of a greater concern about holding out encouragement to the sinner, than about maintaining the glory of God; more of tenderness for the traitor, than of faithful loyalty to the Sovereign; more of pity than of piety. If a prince, distinguished for his clemency, were to issue to a rebel army a proclamation of an immediate and entire amnesty, if they would lay down their arms in token of submission —would there be either reason or gratitude in any of them who should say, this is not a *free* pardon;

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we must have it whether we submit or not; our crime must be cancelled, and the submission must then remain in our own option? Is there no clemency in the prince, and no encouragement to the rebels, unless the former consents to compromise for their sakes the dignity of his throne? Is it not right, I would ask—is it not the very least that propriety dictates—that, when offending creatures are to obtain forgiveness from their justly offended Creator, they should come to him for it, owning their guilt and unworthiness, and seeking it in the name of the atoning Mediator? Is it not right—is it not in accordance with every conception we can form of moral fitness—that sinners should come to God, as the prodigal came to his father, saying, "I have sinned, and am no more worthy," and casting themselves, unconditionally, on sovereign mercy? and that if any, in the haughty disdain, or the sullen obstinacy of presumptuous pride, shall refuse a step so humiliating, they should remain in their guilt, with their blood upon their own heads? that if they will not bow to the mercy of the Saviour, they should feel the severity of the Judge? There is a way of approach for sinners, for the chief of sinners, unobstructed by any obstacles save those which the pride of their own hearts may place there. Is not this enough? If sinners *will* interpose their own obstacles, where God has placed none, who is to blame for the consequences? The God of Heaven, in the plenitude of his everlasting love, has caused an atonement to be made for human guilt. It is an atonement which, in its *sufficiency*, embraces the whole world—men of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. On the ground of this atonement he has issued a proclamation of amnesty, assuring all of a free, and universal, and irrevocable pardon, who, believing his message, throw away the weapons of

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their rebellion, and submit to his mercy. What more would sinners have? What more would it be consistent with the honour of the Divine Ruler to do? He has taken his seat on the throne of his grace; he stretches thence the sceptre of conciliation and peace, and throws wide his palace gate for the free admission of all who will approach to touch it:—or, to use a scripture allusion, the veil has been torn asunder; the way into the Holiest has been laid open; Jehovah appears within, throned on the mercy seat, where has been sprinkled the blood of a divine propitiation; and there, all who come unto Him find pardon, and gracious acceptance. Is this no sufficient encouragement?

Reader, whosoever thou art, if yet standing aloof from God,—there is nothing, be assured, between thee and the enjoyment of his pardoning mercy, in the free, full, and everlasting remission of all thy guilt, but either thine own indifference about it, or thy unwillingness to receive it in God's way. You are harbouring false and unworthy thoughts of Him, you are even making him a liar, if you are fancying any unwillingness on his part to bestow it. He has told you himself, that he "delighteth in mercy." The unwillingness is on your part, not on his. "As God is true," his word to you "is not yea and nay." There is perfect sincerity in it, and unfailing faithfulness. Let the gift of his Son be to you, as it is to all, a sure pledge that he will receive graciously, and with divine joy, every sinner that comes to Him. But no sinner must presume to come in a way of his own devising. He whose sole right it is has prescribed the way. The declaration has come from the lips of the Mediator himself—"I AM THE WAY:—no man cometh unto the Father but by me." But, while no man can come to the Father *but* by Him—it is equally a truth that

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by him *every* man *may* come. The proclamation is to all. It has no exceptive clauses. Wherever we find a man, we find a sinner; and wherever we find a sinner, we find one to whom we may present God's message of mercy, God's "word of reconciliation," and say—"BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED!"

§ 17. It might seem strange to many, were I to conclude without adverting at all to the *practical tendency* of the doctrine which has been opposed in this Essay—the doctrine of universal pardon.—Aware as I am, how unjustly, yet with what virulence and pertinacity, the doctrines of grace have ever been assailed with the charge of immoral tendency, I cannot but be sensible that this is delicate ground. The charge is almost as old as the gospel itself. It had been advanced in the days of Paul; and from his inspired pen it received an early refutation—a refutation, which "none of its adversaries have been able" successfully "to gainsay or to resist." The principles of that refutation have since been frequently and largely illustrated; their theoretical consistency has been demonstrated with the constitution of the human mind, and with all the motives and influences by which its moral sensibilities are awakened and brought into exercise; and the power of the gospel, as a manifestation of the love of God in Christ, when discerned and received under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to renew the heart, and to produce the consecration to the Divine service of the faculties, affections, and active energies of the whole man, has been established by an appeal to facts without number, in every successive age of its history. It would be impossible to illustrate the general principles of this subject, without saying a great deal of which the advocates of universal pardon would lay hold, as having an equal and even an *a fortiori* application

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to their own views;—and, grace being avowedly the basis of both systems, the reasonings and the conclusions of each, in regard to its practical bearings, would, of necessity, in many points, coincide with those of the other. And accordingly, there are many very beautiful things said by the leading supporter (at least from the press) of the new doctrine, with regard to the moral attractions of divine love, which we can by no means allow him to appropriate, as if they had no force of application except upon the admission of that doctrine. For my own part, while perusing, with a glow of delight, some of his touching representations of our connexion with Deity, and of the emanation of the Divine benevolence in the cross, I have for the time forgotten the peculiarity of *his* system, and associating them with my own, have felt their force, and been humbled and ashamed that I did not feel it more. There are only two considerations, which, in closing this Essay, I would suggest to him and those who have embraced his doctrine.

First. The first regards believers. We cannot, as I have formerly said, by any means, allow to the abettors of universal pardon the monopoly, which they seem to claim on behalf of their system, of the motives to grateful and holy obedience arising from the manifestation of God's love in the gift of his Son. Nay, had we leisure now to dwell on the subject, it might easily be shown, how much more powerful must be the excitement to gratitude, derived from regarding the work of Christ as having effected redemption from the second or eternal death, than that which can be felt by those who consider the curse as no more than temporal death, and the redemption that is by Christ as only deliverance from the grave. But I will not press this at present, as I hasten towards a close. I wish the abettors of that system to consider, how unlike, in

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one respect, to the style of the New Testament, is the entire strain of their addresses to the people of God, in that they dwell so exclusively on the motives that are derived from *love*, and leave so completely out of use such as have their source in *fear*. Far be it from me to charge them with making too much of the love of God. It is impossible to make too much of what is infinite. No: the charge is, not that they make too much of his love, but that they make too little of his wrath; not too much of his promises, but too little of his threatenings; not too much of his smiles, but too little of his frowns; not too much of the attractive and encouraging, but too little of the alarming and awful. They delight in sounding the silver tones of the Jubilee trumpet; but they never fill with their breath the trumpet of wo. They say to Believers, "Behold the *goodness* of God." The apostles say, "Behold the goodness *and severity* of God." They dwell, with complacent fondness, on the soft and soothing blandishments of divine communion, while the apostles are warning professors to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling"—to "hold the grace whereby they may serve God acceptably, with reverance and godly fear," reminding them that "even our God is a consuming fire." The apostolic epistles are addressed to believers—to "saints and faithful brethren." Yet it is remarkable, how frequently the writers, in urging to steadfastness, and perseverance in the Christian course, appeal to fear, as well as to love—to that salutary restraining dread, which the awful in the divine character, and intimations, is fitted to inspire. They beseech, it is true, by the mercies of God. They animate by the affectionate exhibition of God's paternal kindness, and of all his "exceeding great and precious promises." But they, at the same time, dissuade

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from those sins to which the propensities of the old man continue prone, by reminding the disciples, that "because of these things the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:"—they warn professors of the perils of apostacy; of the "sorer punishment of which he shall be thought worthy, who treads under foot the Son of God, who counts the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and does despite unto the Spirit of grace." They tell them, that they must "live by faith;" that "if they draw back, God's soul will have no pleasure in them;" that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God;"—that "if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall be anathema maranatha;" that "if they sinned wilfully after having received the knowledge of the truth, there remained no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries:" that "if, after they had escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they were again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end should be worse with them than the beginning;" so that "it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them." They tell them to "fear Him, who, after he hath killed, hath power to destroy both soul and body in hell:" they repeat the admonition, with earnest solemnity, from the lips of the Redeemer himself—"Yea, I say unto you, fear Him." It was not only to his disciples in common with the multitudes, but also to his disciples when in the house by themselves, that Jesus said, in terms the most appalling which the word of God contains—"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than, having two

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hands, to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than, having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Had this style of address not been needful, the Spirit of God would not have employed it. Any system, therefore, must be regarded as defective, that has no recourse to it. I am aware that love must be the grand ruling principle of the believer's character, whose gentle, yet mighty impulse, must carry him through all the varieties of duty, and temptation, and trial. But there is also a salutary fear, to which the apostles do make their frequent appeals. These appeals may be depreciated, as addressing the spirit of selfishness. But by those who so represent them, and who speak of every thing of the kind as if it were unworthy of the spiritual character and lofty principles of the children of God, a descending from that pure element of disinterested love in which they should draw every breath of their new and heavenly being, it should not be forgotten that they are the dictate of God's own Spirit; and that the scheme of doctrine which leaves them out, as having in them too much of self, and of the flesh, must stand convicted of an ultra refinement and transcendentalism; so that, while it wears the imposing aspect of a superior spirituality and perfection, it is really, when tried by the standard of the divine word, deficient —going by halves—failing to bring into exercise, as restraints from evil, those principles, of which,

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as belonging to our nature, though admitted to be inferior, the Scriptures do, in innumerable instances avail themselves, as auxiliaries at least to principle, of a higher order. Surely, we little require to have any restraints removed, that keep us back from sin. And how is it possible that such appeals as those that have just been quoted should tell with any effect whatever—how utterly is their influence neutralized—on the hypothesis that all sin is already pardoned, whether committed by believer or unbeliever, and that the full assurance of our own pardon is a primary element of the belief of the gospel; that a sense of pardon is a sense of nothing peculiar, but only of what is common to every individual of the race; that it cannot, therefore, arise from any peculiar evidence in him who possesses it, from any experience, from any distinguishing character; (for certainly, if the belief of the gospel is the belief of the universality of pardon, of its being the privilege of the wickedest man on earth, as well as of the holiest, it is impossible that any thing distinctive of the believer from the unbeliever, of the holy from the wicked, can, with any consistency, be held necessary to the enjoyment of it;) how thoroughly, on such principles, is every passage in the Bible, that admonishes believers against sin by a reference to the guilt which it brings upon the conscience, and the penal consequences to which it exposes, bereft of its salutary virtue! Bereft, indeed! for of penal consequences, according to the hypothesis, there are none; all being pardoned; there being no curse against transgression, but the death of the body; and this curse being equally removed from all by the resurrection.

Secondly. This leads me just to notice, the effect which the doctrine is fitted to produce upon the world at large.—I have no wish to load the system with consequences for which it is not fairly respon-

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sible; far less would I charge its supporters with being either sensible of the danger, or indifferent about it. No. If evils do result, I believe those evils to be infinitely far from their contemplation. They "mean not so, neither do their hearts think so." Their principle is a just one; that, if what they teach be the truth of God, its own proper effects must be good, and that they are not answerable for such as may result from its abuse. More than this; I believe them to entertain the full conviction that their doctrine of universal pardon is the doctrine that is to subdue before it the enmity of the human heart, —to draw all men to the Saviour,—to regenerate the world. They themselves see in it something so captivating and overpowering, that they can hardly believe it possible it should be resisted. But "old Adam is still too strong for young Melancthon." I give them credit for their zeal, and credit too for their love; although the former is not always so much as might be wished, under the guidance of discretion, and the latter does at times make itself ludicrous, and cause their good to be evil spoken of, by their substituting for the dignified and chastened style of Christian affection, the terms and manner of a fondling endearment, which meek-eyed Charity herself cannot look upon without a suspicion of affectation. —But, however convinced of their good intentions, I am equally convinced that they are under the power of a strange delusion; that they are attaching scriptural authority to error; and that their doctrine, instead of winning the world to God, is really fitted to give licence and audacity to rebellion. Let not this be construed into a denial that any good, any really saving good, has been effected by the ministry of such as preach universal pardon. There is a great deal of genuine gospel truth preached along with it; the all-sufficiency of the atonement, and the unrestricted freeness of divine mercy to sinners, are pro-

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claimed, with an unction, and an earnestness, and a force of individual application, which the blessing of God has, I believe, in some instances (would to God they were more!) rendered the means of awakening and sanctifying impression. But I speak simply of the doctrine that the sins of all are alike pardoned. The true doctrine of the gospel (as I believe it, and, I trust, have shown it to be,) which connects pardon, as well as every other blessing of salvation, with the acceptance of the divine testimony concerning Christ, leaves unbelieving men still under condemnation, still under the restraints of conscience, and the salutary apprehensions of a coming judgment. Would it be well for the world to take these restraints and apprehensions away? Would it be for the benefit of mankind, were the persuasion becoming prevalent, that all sin is actually pardoned and cancelled; that no trespass is now recorded in the Book of God's remembrance; and that, whatever amount of crime a transgressor may accumulate, he has nothing to fear from it, as it is all included in the universal amnesty, and, the penalty being entirely taken away, can make no difference in his future condition? The general reception of such a principle seems pregnant with mischief. The proclamation of it to mankind is the proclamation of a plenary indulgence to the commission of all iniquity, and the wide opening of the floodgates of licentiousness. Our friends who have embraced the error may disregard such a charge, and attempt to turn aside the edge of it, by alleging, that the grace of the gospel has always been maligned by the imputation of a similar tendency. But the cases are not at all parallel. The doctrine of salvation by grace, through faith in Christ, connects pardon, inseparably, with the reception of a truth that is at once humbling and sanctifying: to which the pride, and the corruption

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of the heart, in all their forms, are naturally and virulently hostile. But the new doctrine announces a pardon unassociated with any thing of the kind, a pardon actually existing, absolute and unqualified, extending to all the sins, past, present, and to come, of every individual of the human race. This is a doctrine that must be the very reverse of unacceptable. And nothing, I should think, could hinder its general reception, but the strong testimony existing against it, in the natural judgments and consciences of men. The ungodly, however palatable the doctrine may be felt, will shake their heads, and, with a smile of incredulity, say, "Ah! it is too good to be true!"—God is said, by the Apostle Paul, to have "abounded in his grace to sinners, *in all wisdom and prudence.*" And, among other views of this wisdom and prudence, as manifested in the constitution of the scheme of mercy, this is one deserving of notice and admiration, that while it provides salvation for those who receive the truth, it takes off from the unbelieving world none of the restraints imposed by the damnatory threatenings of the law, and the premonitions, dictated by conscience, of their future execution. These checks, as far as they operate, are eminently salutary to human society. The importance of them has been felt and acknowledged in all ages. To remove, or even to weaken them, is perilous. Let men beware of every attempt to improve upon the wise arrangements of Heaven—"the wonderful works of Him who is perfect in knowledge."

THE END.

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